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Frontier Hopkinsians: New School Theology in East Tennessee 1797-1861

Ronald Russell Ragon
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Ronald Russell Ragon entitled "Frontier Hopkinsians: New School Theology in East Tennessee 1797-1861." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Lorri Glover, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Steven Ash, Bruce Wheeler

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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FRONTIER HOPKINSIANS:
NEW SCHOOL THEOLOGY
IN EAST TENNESSEE 1797-1861

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ronald Russell Ragon
August 2002

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Sandy,
and to my daughters, Samantha and Madeline
– those whom God uses to make my life beautiful.

Soli Deo Gloria

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I wish to thank all those who patiently aided me in learning to write. Suffering though revision after revision, Dr. Lorri Glover encouraged me to overcome my weaknesses. Dr. Stephen Ash taught me how to say more by saying less. I thank Dr. Bruce Wheeler for serving on my committee. Early on, Dr. Lorman Ratner inspired in me a great admiration for the work of the American reformers. I thank my extended family and my people at Lookout Valley Presbyterian Church, E.P.C. for allowing and enabling me to pursue the study of History. Finally, I thank Jacky Arnold and the United States Air Force for enabling me to finish this work.

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to define the role that the theology of New England theologian Samuel Hopkins played in the development of frontier East Tennessee. Early educators Hezekiah Balch and Charles Coffin introduced the work of northern benevolence societies to Tennessee in the early nineteenth century. These societies encouraged the spread of Hopkinsian theology and caused those Presbyterians in East Tennessee who held to New School thought to clash with other Presbyterians in the area who were influenced by popular revivalist efforts. Because of differing theologies, Two Presbyterianisms emerged in East Tennessee before the Civil War and remained until the 1980s.

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INTRODUCTION

East Tennessee was unique in the early 1800s because both northern and southern Presbyterian evangelicals worked there to fulfill their spiritual missions. From 1797 until 1837, a reform impulse driven by the Congregationalist spiritual awakening of New England clashed with a strong revivalist trend that characterized the work of Presbyterian evangelicals in Virginia and Kentucky. The Presbyterian insistence on a trained clergy even on a frontier hostile to education drove the president of Greeneville College, Hezekiah Balch, to invite Congregationalists to work with Presbyterians in East Tennessee. Charles Coffin, a product of New England's Congregationalist establishment, joined Balch on the frontier and instituted the work of volunteer societies among East Tennessee Presbyterians. Under the influence of northern revivalism, Coffin encouraged the work of local and national benevolent societies in East Tennessee and therefore established a northern evangelical presence unique in the South.

Other Presbyterians in East Tennessee, under the leadership of educator Samuel Doak, were not influenced by New England's reform impulse but by the spiritual individualism of the Great Revival of Kentucky and its commitment to the conversion of sinners. Though they initially dedicated themselves to opposing slavery, these revivalist Presbyterians gradually abandoned their stand against the peculiar institution to make themselves more acceptable to white society. Those Presbyterians influenced most by Kentucky's style of revivalism became the first to oppose New England's reform efforts

in the South. They consistently saw in the anti-slavery efforts of the New School a threat to the accepted values of southern white society.

East Tennessee's two styles of revivalism, one individualistic, the other more community-minded, prepared the way for the ideological split that occurred between the Presbyterians in East Tennessee prior to the Civil War. By 1861, there were two Presbyterianisms in the area: one reforming and nationalistic, the other revivalist and provincial. Among the Presbyterians of East Tennessee one's commitment either to the revivals of New England or to those of the South affected one's commitment to the Union or Confederacy.

The McClung Collection of the Knox County Public Library contains documents for uncovering the experiences of early Presbyterians in East Tennessee. Charles Coffin's journal documents his struggle to bring New England's version of Christianity to frontier society. More enlightening than his journal are the letters Coffin wrote to the prominent Hopkinsian clergyman Leonard Woods, the president of the American Education Society. These tell of New England's hope for a Christian Tennessee. In their letters to Coffin, Woods and other New Englanders wrote of the role their social agenda might play in the establishment of frontier society. Such letters provide valuable insight into Coffin's determination to bring New England's benevolent work to the frontier and New Englander's willingness to invest in his cause.

The Presbyterian Historical Society in Montreat, North Carolina, houses the records of most early American Presbyterian bodies. The Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas recount the details of the great Hopkinsian controversy that raged between Hezekiah Balch and other Tennessee Presbyterians from 1796 until 1798. The Minutes

of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America reveal Balch's struggle with the national Presbyterian assembly. The records of local presbyteries such as Abingdon and Holston highlight the continuing conflict between local churches over Hopkinsian theology well into the 1820s. Local, regional, and national church records from the period disclose the schismatic effect New England's evangelicalism exerted in the Presbyterian church in East Tennessee. Secondary sources provide valuable insight into the information the primary sources record.

Recent historiography of the revivals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries focuses on how evangelical ideas that spread in the South during a period of religious fervor later changed to better fit a slaveholding society. In Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt, Christine Leigh Heyrman asserts that southern evangelicals increasingly made concessions in order to accommodate slaveholders. By pushing slaves out of their fellowships and drawing masters in, by relaxing their strict teaching and control over domestic matters, and by embracing southern ideas of manliness, evangelicalism in the South made itself a religion at peace with its society. Heyrman maintains that the world of southern evangelicals and the world of southern masters converged. Southern evangelicals and the revivals they thus upheld slaveholding values.[1]

John B. Boles points out in The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt that Southern evangelicalism encouraged provincialism and conservatism by emphasizing the individual sinner's need for conversion. Evangelicals in the South gradually modified their doctrine and practices to make themselves acceptable to the greatest number of

[1] Christine Leigh Heyrman, Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 248.

people. Boles maintains that since southern evangelicals saw the church as a volunteer society that existed for the conversion of sinners, they did not organize themselves for the Christianization of society. Instead, southern religion became practical, provincial and individualistic. Evangelicals in the North focused on transforming the world, while those in the South converted sinners, especially white ones. The churches in the Midwest and Northeast developed the evangelical united front for national reform efforts, and the long standing Congregational establishment in Massachusetts and Connecticut served as the command post for this activity. However, these endeavors in social reform never became a vital part of southern religion.[2] Stephen Aron, in How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay, describes the role religion played in the development of early Kentucky. Whereas evangelicals opposed slavery in the Kentucky of the late 1700s, they eventually made concessions to masters in order to ensure their own survival. In a region becoming increasingly dependent on the peculiar institution, evangelicals altered their stance on slavery in support of the Bluegrass system of men like Henry Clay. Thus, in making itself safe for masters who needed conversion, southern evangelicalism capitulated to affluent white society. [3]

In Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier T. Scott Miyakawa shows how northern revivalism in the early 1800s under men such as Charles G. Finney differed from southern revivalism. In the emotional camp meetings of Kentucky, the individual sinner entered by conversion an other-worldly life

[2] John B. Boles, The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1972), 129.

[3] Stephen Aron How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 191-7.

of the Spirit, while the northern revivalists reasoned their listeners into a life of Christian service in their communities. Miyakawa suggests that Finney and other northern evangelists like him urged their converts to dedicate themselves to causes ranging from education to penal reform, from abolition to clerical training. [4]

Other historians maintain that northern evangelical efforts at reform derived from the social needs of a new and diverse nation. In The Life of the Mind in America, Perry Miller writes about the religious revivals of the early 1800s, "In the end, the revival had somehow to confess that though it first broke upon the world as an upheaval, a violent swell of passion, what it really wanted, and indeed always wanted, was to preserve the union of the states, and that what it sought for were means of establishing the bond without relying upon the legal formulations of the intellect or of the law." According to Miller, the revivals that followed the American Revolution expressed less concern about how a sinner could be saved than they did about how a very diverse nation could remain united and how local groups of differing people could act in community. Because revivals took on the role of developing social cohesion, maintaining them concerned believers in the early republic.[5]

By 1830 it had become apparent to many evangelicals in America that even though the revivals of the early 1800s promoted national unity, slavery had created two societies with differing social needs. Southern Christians concerned themselves less and less with establishing a Christian nation and more and more with preserving their peculiar

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[4] T. Scott Miyakawa, Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 172.

[5] Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), 71.

institution. This triumph of radical ideology over religion set southerners in opposition to northern evangelicals.

East Tennessee provides a unique ground for studying the ways northern and southern evangelicalism differed and finally clashed in the antebellum South. The division in East Tennessee Presbyterianism expressed two different loyalties, two different theologies, and two different revival styles. The formal split between Presbyterians occurred in 1837 when the Synod of Tennessee, alone in the South, joined the New School General Assembly. The New School's clear stance against the institution of slavery forced some East Tennessee Presbyterians into fellowship with the Old School, a body accommodating to slaveholders. When the Civil War came to East Tennessee, the two distinct theologies of the Presbyterian groups required them to take opposite sides.

By 1861, American Presbyterians had divided into northern and southern bodies, but in East Tennessee, the division between those Presbyterians who worked to reform society and those who beckoned the slaveholder into their fellowship existed long before. This thesis seeks to describe the roots and nature of the theological division between Presbyterians in East Tennessee that lasted from the late 1790s until 1984 when the Presbyterian Church of the United States (Confederate) and the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (Unionist) reunited. The first chapter will describe the revivalistic religious environment that produced both Presbyterian theologies of early East Tennessee. The efforts of the president of Greeneville College, Hezekiah Balch, to coax New England Congregationalists southward to join in his work comprise chapter two. Chapter three relates how Charles Coffin joined Balch on the frontier and instituted

the work of volunteer societies in East Tennessee among Presbyterians. The final chapter demonstrates how Coffin's work in East Tennessee helped establish an evangelical presence unique in the South.

CHAPTER I

American Theology and Religious Revivals

By 1800 the frontier in East Tennessee contained two distinct Presbyterian sects. Powerful religious revivals, one in New England and another in Virginia, produced these Presbyterianisms. Although the same denomination united Christians from both sects, the two often clashed in minor theological squabbles that revealed significant differences in belief. Both groups embraced a religion that adopted enlightenment ideas about the role of the individual in society, and both sought to take their beliefs to the West. Yet an age of religious awakenings encouraged evangelicals to practice their faith in two very different ways. New England's revivals encouraged believers to transform America by working together with other Christians in benevolent societies dedicated to social reform. On the other hand, the revivals of Virginia encouraged believers to practice their religion by leading individual souls to personal spiritual rebirth. Participants in the latter developed a more individualistic form of Christianity, while the former became more conscious of the collective needs of society and molded their doctrine to address them. In order to understand the late eighteenth-century religious developments in Tennessee, however, one must first return to the theological struggles in late colonial New England.

In the mid-eighteenth century, an atmosphere of religious excitement swept the English speaking world. Ministers on both sides of the Atlantic wrote to each other about the activities in their congregations, and their letters fueled the general reawakening of

religious concerns among both British and American Protestants.[1] The Congregationalists of New England and the Presbyterians of the middle colonies became the first to experience the power of this Atlantic religious revival. Though some historians believe the general Christian excitement of the 1730s and 40's created a "Great Awakening" others argue it represented only a stronger episode in an atmosphere of religious enthusiasm beginning in America in the 1670s.[2]

Perry Miller argued in Errand into the Wilderness, that the revivals of the First Great Awakening, despite occurring within a larger Atlantic context, derived from distinctively American cultural developments. Puritans insisted that one must have a concrete conversion experience before being accepted into church membership. The second generation of Puritans, who were raised in the church and who had always known religion, could not point to definite instances of conversion and therefore were excluded from membership until they could do so. Since many continued into adulthood without making a public profession of faith, the Puritans sought to include their families in the church community through the device called the "halfway covenant." Through it, the second generation of Puritans could bring their children into the church community

[1] Susan O'Brien, "Transatlantic Community of the Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755," in American Historiological Review. 91 (Spring 1986): 811-32. O'Brien does an excellent job of examining the revivals of the 1740s in their Atlantic dimension. She argues that instead of the first Great Awakening being a single phenomenon, it formed a part of a general religious renewal occurring during the 1730s and 1740s throughout the English-speaking world. O'Brien shows how ministers used trans-Atlantic contacts for the discussion and dissemination of information about revival activities.

[2] Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Butler calls the Great Awakening "interpretive fiction." Rather than being a monumental religious event, it represented one component of a widespread and contrived revivalism from the 1670's onward. According to Butler, the revivals that periodically occurred were not as radical as they were conservative, and they tended to increase the power and prestige of the clergy rather than opening the ecclesiastical establishment to the laity. The clergy pushed the notion of revival to encourage involvement in church. The revivals of the late eighteenth century served to build up the established churches and to

without pointing to a dramatic conversion. Yet they were excluded from communion until they evidenced an emotional religious experience.[3]

Some halfway members eventually claimed full membership, and as more and more of them did "see the light" the practice of covenanting oneself to a congregation became a common practice in New England communities. Whereas the original Puritans asked that every sinner wrestle with his own sin and experience individual conversion, by the late 1600s the conversion experience became a community event with numerous halfway members simultaneously covenanting themselves to a church. By the early 1700s, the communal confession was becoming the focus for the spiritual life of Puritan communities.[4]

Solomon Stoddard of Northampton, Massachusetts, became the first Puritan to openly invite halfway members to make public professions of faith in a church service with no prior arrangements. "Harvests" occurred when massive numbers of people responded to the invitation to confess a religious experience and be admitted to communion. In 1679, 1683, 1696, 1712, and 1718 the citizens of Northampton responded "en masse" to Stoddard's invitation to public profession of faith and church

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keep church attendance at a steady level if not improving religious enthusiasm.

[3] Perry Miller, Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 159. Miller ties the first Great Awakening to the community rite of "owning the covenant" that emerged directly from the widespread usage of the halfway covenant.

[4] Miller offered the following description of the practice of owning the covenant: "It was not enough that the minister labored separately with John or Elizabeth to make an acknowledgement the next Sunday: a day was appointed when all the Johns and Elizabeths would come to church and do it in unison, the whole town looking on." Errand Into the Wilderness, 159. See also Sydney Ahlstrom who argues that even though the half-way covenant solved some important doctrinal uncertainties, it did not relieve the religious declension in eighteenth-century New England. Instead, the device allowed Puritans to ignore the real reasons for declining membership, such as growing concern for earthly things like land and furs. In the end, the halfway covenant threatened Puritanism by excluding many potential church members during a period when the male population was decimated by King Phillip's War and the church's influence was lessened by the revocation of the charter of Massachusetts. A Religious History of the American People, (New Haven:

membership. Though some attacked Stoddard for opening communion to anyone, many residents of the Connecticut Valley responded to his pleas. The revivals of the First Great Awakening soon followed as Stoddard's grandson, Jonathan Edwards, preached even more vehemently the sinner's need for conversion.[5]

In 1734, Edwards's preaching began to evoke a strong response in his congregation at Northampton. Although not especially emotive, his sermons stressed the need for an experience of conviction of sin and divine forgiveness. Convinced of the need for a personal religious conversion, Edwards's audience responded, some with emotional outbursts, but many with a remarkable change in their personal and devotional lives.[6] The news of the excitement at Edwards's church spread quickly by word of mouth and through Edwards's own account. These reports inspired revivalism in other parts of New England.[7]

Yale University Press, 1972), 159-160.

[5] Miller says that Stoddard was the first to extend the covenant to those who were not even hal-fway members. Errand Into the Wilderness, 160.

[6] Michael J. Crawford, Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in its British Context (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Crawford places the revivals of the 1730's and 1740's in their Atlantic context and shows how they occurred in an English speaking arena of religious excitement. Crawford seeks the roots of the New England model for revival, which he defines as a sudden atmosphere of religious excitement resulting in the religious awakening of a whole town. The author traces the roots of the revival model to the Puritans and Presbyterians of England under Charles II and James II who encouraged the religious revival to gain support for their causes in England and Scotland. Crawford says that such revivals included calls for repentance, the practice of covenant renewal, and even the establishment of societies for the reformation of manners. All of these aspects flowed into New England's concept of revival.

[7] Crawford argues that the New England model for revival came together and received its first measure of expression in the Connecticut revivals of the 1730s. Crawford says that Jonathan Edwards' A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God (1737) became the map for future revivals in New England. Seasons of Grace. Edwin Scott Gaustad says that the news of the revival that spread by word of mouth was far more important than Edwards's account. By the time Edwards wrote his Faithful Narrative, the revival had already spread. The Great Awakening in New England,(New York: Harper & Row, 1957). Marilyn Westerkamp argues that the First Great Awakening was neither a new type of religious phenomenon nor a challenge by the laity to the ecclesiastical establishment of New England. Instead, she insists, revivalism as

By the summer of 1734, the movement swept the area around Northampton and reached into Connecticut. As the revivals gained momentum, the news of similar occurrences in England further encouraged religious fervor among American Protestants.[8] Excited by the news of the American Awakening, George Whitefield, the Anglican leader of the revivals in England, traveled to the colonies. In the fall of 1740, his preaching fanned the flames of the religious revival and encouraged emotionalism among its participants. As news of the awakening spread through personal contacts and the press, local pastors from various traditions tried to follow the examples of Whitefield and Edwards. They sought to bring about conviction, repentance, and a personal experience of God through their preaching. People wept in sorrow for their sins, many sang and shouted joyfully, and some became so overwhelmed that they fainted. All this occurred among Calvinistic Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches.

Historically, Puritans and Presbyterians considered the rational formulation of their religion, as it existed in the Westminster Confession, as central to personal faith. When the religion of the mind also became a religion of the emotions, many did not know how to react. Some contemporaries interpreted the awakening of the 1730s and

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seen in New England during the 1730s and 1740s was a part of the Scots-Irish religious temperament and tradition that colonial ministers encouraged by their preaching. In the protracted communion meetings among Presbyterians in Ireland and Scotland, Westerkamp sees the roots of the Great Awakening. Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[8] Susan O'Brien argues that the Great Awakening was a result of the continuation of the activities of a seventeenth-century Puritan letter-writing community that took on fresh evangelical techniques and attitudes. The new trans-Atlantic Christian community spread the news and techniques of revival through letters and other evangelical media. In support of her argument, the author cites Jonathan Edwards's words written to James Robe in Scotland in 1745, " The Church of God, in all parts of the world, is but one; the distant members are closely united in one glorious head. This union is very much her beauty; as is the mutual and friendly correspondence of the various members in distant parts of the world." "Transatlantic Community of the Saints". 822.

1740s as a sign of new life, but others saw in it a threat to their religious traditions and the stability of colonial society. The revivalist atmosphere soon divided the Presbyterian clergy who held tight to their theological traditions from those who embraced the revivals and the new conceptions of salvation. Those who followed the influence of Edwards and Whitefield became known as "New Lights."

The "Old Lights" opposed the New Lights and saw in the awakening a dangerous drift away from theological orthodoxy, particularly from the Westminster Confession of Faith, the official doctrinal statement of Presbyterians.[9] The Long Parliament approved the confession of 1647 after 121 theologians gathered in Westminster Abbey for four years to put into writings the Puritan formulation of the Church of England's creed. Since the Puritan Parliament hoped to win the hearts of Scottish Presbyterians, the Confession became the definitive statement of the Reformation in England. By the time the Westminster Assembly completed the Confession in 1647, America was colonized, and the Confession became a vital document in shaping the first century of American Presbyterianism. Presbyterians in colonial seaboard settlements held fast to the Confession, and many saw any divergence from the Westminster Standards (the Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms) as heresy. However, in the early 1700's as Presbyterianism moved into the American frontier, some ministers relaxed their views of the Confession.[10]

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[9] Leonard J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949). Trinterud demonstrates that Presbyterianism changed when it crossed the Atlantic and, as a result, two rival groups formed in American Presbyterianism. A conservative faction with strong attachments to the traditions of Europe was supplanted by a more cosmopolitan segment with an English Puritan background that feared strong ecclesiastical ties to Europe.

[10] Ahlstrom, Religious History of the American People, 270-272.

The struggle over the extent to which Presbyterian ministers held to the Confession resulted in the Adopting Act of 1729. This gave Presbyteries the right to determine whether a minister strayed too far from the confession to remain orthodox. The Adopting Act left room for theological latitude among Presbyterians. Yet it left a sharp distinction between those who held tight to the Confession and those who saw subscription as secondary to faith. The rift dividing those who insisted on strict subscription to the Confession and those who did not widened during the awakenings of the 1730s and 1740s. The New Lights gathered together on the "New Side"; those who opposed them remained on the "Old Side."[11]

The revivals under New Side leaders such as William and Gilbert Tennent emphasized conviction, conversion, assurance of salvation, and emotionalism. The Tennents represented a new Scots-Irish group among Presbyterians in the middle colonies who were very revivalistic in practice.[12] William Robinson, a New Side missionary, brought the revivals of the early 1740s to North Central Virginia, and from there new religious fervor spread under the leadership of New Side Presbyterians like Samuel Davies, a young widower from Delaware. The revivals that Davies led in Hanover County, Virginia, produced numerous New Side ministers who later led the Presbyterian church on the frontier after the American Revolution.[13] Old Side leaders disapproved of revivalist innovations fearing they emphasized emotion over orthodox

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[11] Ibid..

[12] Ibid, 269.

[13] John B. Boles, The Great Revival : Beginnings of the Bible Belt (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1972), 2-8. See also Donald G Matthews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: University of

doctrine. New Side leaders saw emotional conversion as primary to a personal experience with God. The Old Side/New side split of 1741 lasted only seventeen years, but it marked a distinct transition in American Presbyterianism in which the quest for personal conviction and religious experience took precedence over European tradition.[14]

Although a Congregationalist, Jonathan Edwards exercised great influence among New Side Presbyterians because of the critical role he played in defining the nature of revivalism in the mid-eighteenth century. Besides taking a leading role in the awakening in New England, Edwards developed a distinctive theology that made its way into the churches of those who heard his preaching and read his writings.[15] In such works as A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, Edwards taught that only a transformed heart, not the quality or intensity of religious emotions or feelings, revealed one's true spiritual devotion.[16] In Freedom of the Will, Edwards argued that one's character, after being transformed by God, showed itself primarily in acts of righteousness. Since humans, because of original sin, were corrupt creatures, they could not please God unless he changed their character. According to Edwards, the changed actions, motivations, and goals of the believer revealed this transformation of character and will.[17]

Chicago Press, 1977), 17-23.

[14] According to Trinterud, the Great Awakening hastened the development of a distinct American Presbyterianism by emphasizing personal piety, by providing the impetus for preachers to go to the frontier, and by encouraging the development of a native ministry trained in the Log Colleges and at Princeton.

[15] George M. Marsden, The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-century America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970). Marsden discusses how Edwards's theology informed New School doctrine. The New School's confidence in the dignity, freedom, and moral ability of man was well-accepted in the era of Jackson and Emerson, except by the Old School theologians who believed such ideas conflicted with the scriptural teaching of man's depravity.

[16] Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, in The Works of President Edwards, 4 vols. (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1968) 2:103.

Whereas Calvinist theologians preceding him emphasized the activity of the Holy Spirit in producing conversion, Edwards insisted on the simultaneous action of the human will. God produced the fuel for conversion, but it was up to the transformed will to burn it. Edwards maintained that God and a human were partners in conversion. God initiated conversion, but the believer had to be obedient to God in order for God to act in him. Edwards asserted, "God is the only author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects wholly passive and wholly active."[18] Edwards' insistence that man was wholly passive pleased his fellow Calvinists, yet his insistence on man's total activity in the conversion process raised their eyebrows. Such an insistence seemed to question God's sovereignty. The Old Side leaders rejected such ideas, and they used the Confession's silence on the matter to point to the fallacy of this belief. New Side proponents agreed with Edwards: the idea of a transformed will lay at the heart of their theology.[19] It was Edwards' insistence on the concrete effects of conversion, a transformed morality and mind, a softened heart, and a personal relationship with the Divine that his student Samuel Hopkins, attempted to describe in greater detail. Hopkins, a 1741 graduate of Yale, was profoundly affected by Edwards' commencement sermon that year. Afterward, Hopkins spent eight months learning from Edwards in Northampton. Yet the ideas of student and teacher differed. While Edwards was an idealist, seeing every human action as existing in one's mind as a conscious idea apart

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[17] Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, Ibid 2:203.

[18] Jonathan Edwards, "The Nature of True Virtue", Ibid, 3:106.

[19] William K Brittenbach, "Piety and Moralism: Edwards and the New Divinity," in Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout eds., Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Brittenbach contends that the New Divinity merged in Edwards's writings before his death, and

from the will, Hopkins and many of Edwards's students, who later became known as the New Divinity men, were not idealists. Instead, they saw the mind and will as partners that produced proper actions. What Edwards and his disciples defined as the effects of genuine conversion, Hopkins translated into the necessity of the Christian to be willfully involved in proper acts characterized by disinterested benevolence. Hopkins defined this type of charity, or true Christian love, as good works motivated only by the New Testament command to love one's neighbor as oneself.[20] According to Hopkins, when the sinner's heart was transformed, when the will was reclaimed by God, then the sinner would act without any selfish motives and do good works not to be saved or to earn favor with God, but to show his or her devotion. The generation of Christian thinkers after Edwards, including Hopkins, tried to lay out in greater detail the nature of good works and how Christians could perform them in the world. To Samuel Hopkins, disinterested benevolence, or true Christian love, meant becoming involved in the reform of society.

After graduating from Yale and spending time studying under Edwards at Northampton, Hopkins served as the pastor of a struggling parish in western Massachusetts. He eventually settled down in Newport, Rhode Island, where he served as minister until his death. Hopkins's greatest contribution was his two-volume theological treatise, System of Doctrines, published in 1793. Hopkins's *magnum opus* represented the first systematic theology to reflect the New Side conception of conversion and Christian morality. In it, Hopkins delved further than Edwards into the nature of Christian virtue. To Edwards, moral virtue resulted in good will. To Hopkins, it

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Edwards's disciples remained true to his principles.

[20] James E. Hoopes, "Calvinism and Consciousness From Edwards to Beecher," Ibid, 213-235.

consisted of good works. Hopkins saw benevolence as charitable love toward God, one's neighbors, and all of creation. In such a conception, one's Christian duty touched all of society.[21]

While reflecting Edwards's understanding of original sin and its effects on the human mind and morality, Hopkins made his own contribution to the New Divinity by identifying self-love as the concrete effect of man's fallen human nature. Sin had caused Adam to act out of self-love - to eat the forbidden fruit. Hopkins wrote that self-love "is the source of all the profanity and impiety in the world; and of all pride and ambition among men; which is nothing but selfishness acted out in this particular way."[22] Though Hopkins did not express an idea new to New England and the Puritan tradition, in the eyes of his contemporaries he often went too far, bordering on the theologically absurd. Hopkins believed that the true Christian must be willing to spend an eternity in hell if by so doing one sinner might be saved. Of course, Hopkins's adversaries made light of such a proposition, scoffing that in such a scenario one only needed to want hell in order to get heaven.

As confusing as such an assertion seemed, it reflected a theology moving from the realm of academics into the arena of social reform. The Hopkinsian position becomes intelligible when one relates it to the eighteenth-century debate on the nature of moral virtue and to what Hopkins and his school, the New Divinity, saw as a social crisis in New England. Hopkins argued that a Christian needed to show devotion by performing

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[21] Samuel Hopkins, The System of Doctrine Contained in Divine Revelation quoted in Marsden, The Evangelical Mind, 80.

[22] Hopkins, "An Inquiry into the nature of True Holiness" quoted in Marsden, The Evangelical Mind, 91.

good deeds. In time, this commitment to active virtue came to embrace the reform of society.[23]

Writing in the Revolutionary era, Hopkins applied his beliefs about disinterested benevolence and social reform to his fight against slavery. Because of involvement in the international slave trade, Hopkins's home town of Newport, Rhode Island, became a symbol to many American theologians of moral failure and portended a society of greedy and selfish individuals.[24] In Newport, Hopkins observed the slave trade first hand, and he heard horrible stories of the suffering, disease and death involved in the middle passage. At the same time, he understood the many economic benefits his fellow Christians obtained at the expense of Africans. He therefore called for repentance of the commercial manifestations of self-love that the slave trade exhibited. Writing to a friend in Providence, Hopkins described his own efforts at disinterested benevolence in Newport: "I have dared publicly to declare that this town is the most guilty respecting the slave trade of any on the continent, as it has been, in a great built by the blood of poor Africans; and the only way to escape the effects of Divine displeasure is to be sensible of

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[23] Mark Noll, Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 113-9. Noll shows that evangelicalism gained adherents and institutional power by treating the post-revolutionary situations as social crises in need of evangelical improvements. He says that even though evangelicalism encouraged the anti-traditionalist rhetoric of its ministers, it was an excellent founder of traditions.

[24] James A. Rawley, the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1981), 355-84. Rawley calls Newport, Rhode Island, the *locus classicus* of the slave trade in the eighteenth century. Newport's vitality as an urban center made possible its far-reaching enterprise in slave trafficking. Rawley locates the success of Newport in the slave industry with its elite families who invested heavily in it. Newport's golden age of slaving lasted from 1762 until the opening of the American Revolution, during which time the population of the town doubled. Another prosperous time for Newport's trade industry lasted from 1783 until 1808. Samuel Hopkins served the First Congregational Church of Newport from 1769 until his death in 1803.

the sin, repent, and reform."[25]

The New Divinity as outlined and expounded by Hopkins influenced a number of young ministers including Nathaniel Emmons, who taught Hopkinsianism to a rising generation of New England clergy immediately following the American Revolution. Besides producing volumes of sermons systematically arranged by topic, Emmons (1745-1840) taught over one hundred men who entered the Congregationalist ministry during his fifty-four years as a pastor in Franklin, Massachusetts. In so doing, he trained more ministers than any other person of his generation. Indeed he probably did more to perpetuate the New Divinity than did Hopkins himself. [26]

Emmons expounded and clarified the New Divinity as he applied it to human behavior. According to Emmons, righteousness or sin consisted of right or wrong actions performed by the believer under testing from God. In Emmons's view, one held responsibility for one's own sin and, conversely, for one's own holiness. Original sin, if existent, played a minor role in an individual's decision to do right or wrong. This insistence on individual responsibility toward the church and society reflected the same Enlightenment principles that the American Revolution expressed in political terms.[27] As Emmons's disciples entered New England pulpits in droves from the years following the Revolution until the early decades of the 1800s, they bore the social conscience of a

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[25] Samuel Hopkins to Moses Brown, 19 April 1784, reprinted in Joseph A. Conforti, Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1981), 134.
[26] Ahlstrom, Religious History of the American People, 411.

[27] Ibid., 362-4. Ahlstrom says that the American Revolution showed a new departure from traditional precepts of natural law. As the Puritans had emphasized inward experience in their practice of religion, Americans came to shift their focus from the order of nature and government to the reality of natural rights. Thus, natural law became more man-centered and stressed human rights more than cosmic order, the individual more than the state, and liberty more than authority. In such an era, theologians began to focus

theology of the heart.[28]

Between 1797 and 1801, the towns of Connecticut and New Hampshire began to see signs of a new religious fervor. This Second Great Awakening that began under the preaching of Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale College, flourished in the Congregational churches of New England for thirty years.[29] Young ministers steeped in the tenets of Hopkinsianism and taught by men such as Nathaniel Emmons led the second Great Awakening in New England. The first phase of this revival occurred in Connecticut and New Hampshire between 1797 and 1801 and visited, almost exclusively, the parishes of the New Divinity men.[30] Timothy Dwight led another phase of the Awakening at Yale from 1801-1802, as did Moses Stuart from 1807-1808. Other phases followed in New England from 1815 until 1831, during which time the revival became a consistent part of Congregationalist life in New England. The Hopkinsians saw divine favor in the atmosphere of religious enthusiasm and they viewed the second Great Awakening as a result of their disinterested benevolence.

Although the new religious fervor exhibited less emotionalism than the first Great Awakening, it was no less intense. Whereas emotional energy was the driving force of the revivals of the 1740's, the revivalistic vigor of the 1790's showed itself in a desire for social action and disinterested benevolence.

The Hopkinsians first channeled their revival energy into the area of missionary

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on the individual's role in culture, instead of his simple obedience to divine mandate.

[28] Ahlstrom, Religious History of the American People, 410-12.

[29] See Noll, Evangelicalism, 113-9.

[30] Ahlstrom, Religious History of the American People, 416-7. Ahlstrom maintains that until Methodistic practices and a revised "New School" theology began to take hold in the later period of the second Great

activity.[31] The Enlightenment conceptions of the individual's place in society that became a vital part of Revolutionary ideology in America bolstered the idea that Christians should play a distinct role in settling the frontier.[32] Voluntary associations emerged from the Hopkinsian urge for missions. Such associations, though originally maintaining a nominal tie to the Congregational church, eventually crossed denominational lines. In 1798, the Congregationalist General Association of Connecticut voted to become the central agency for the evangelization of "the Heathen in North America, and to support and promote Christian knowledge in the new settlements within the United States."[33] Although the Connecticut Missionary Society attempted to convert Indians, most of their work concentrated on planting new churches on the frontier among whites.[34] In 1799, the Congregationalists in Massachusetts founded the Massachusetts Missionary Society along similar lines as the Connecticut organization.

Both associations used magazines to gain support and promote their work. In 1800 the Connecticut Society began to publish the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and the Massachusetts Society followed in 1803 with The Massachusetts Missionary

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Awakening, the revivals in New England were remarkably uniform in their appearances and came consistently to the churches of the New Divinity preachers.

[31] In Marsden's estimation, western expansion fostered New Schoolism, of which Hopkinsianism constituted a vital part. Evangelical Mind. See also, Charles Roy Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942).

[32] Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Hatch argues that the democratic impulse as expressed in the ideology of the American Revolution provided the means that allowed evangelical Protestantism to flourish in the early national period. The second Great Awakening was characterized by a democratic impulse that aimed at wresting religion from the control of clerical hierarchy. According to Hatch, the "common" people wanted to control their own lives and not be dictated to by elites. See also Donald G. Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," American Quarterly, 21 (Spring 1969):101-131.

[33] Ahlstrom, Religious History of the American People, 423.

Magazine. One of the most active supporters of the Massachusetts Society, Nathaniel Emmons, edited their periodical. When the Congregationalists and Presbyterians joined forces in 1801 in an action known as the Plan of Union, such volunteer societies, driven by Hopkinsian zeal and fueled by new support and enthusiasm, aimed their efforts at the developing West.[35]

Since Christianity, in the Hopkinsian definition, centered around disinterested benevolence, Hopkinsians willingly crossed denominational lines in order to accomplish missionary goals. In the 1801 Plan of Union, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Churches of Connecticut, and later Vermont and Massachusetts, agreed to join forces to build churches in the West. Under this arrangement, the two denominations recognized each other's ministers and church government and united with one another in their missionary endeavors.[36]

Many Presbyterians objected to the Plan of Union because it gave Congregationalist ministers the right to vote in the courts of the Presbyterian Church. Other Presbyterians, who later joined together in the New School, believed that the Plan presented an opportunity for denominational expansion. Under the Plan, Presbyterians and Congregationalists in a frontier community could form one congregation and hire either a Congregationalist or a Presbyterian minister. The choice of whether to affiliate

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid. Ahlstrom shows that the revivals of the late 1700s and early 1800s in the parishes of the New Divinity men produced a pious sobriety in the churches and pushed believers towards a reformation of morals and a new missionary zeal. Unlike the first Great Awakening, the second Great Awakening in New England was not marked by emotional extremes but a religious seriousness. It was this seriousness among Congregationalists and Presbyterians in New England and the middle colonies that first encouraged the missionary impulse of the early 1800's and produced the benevolent empire. Ahlstrom, Religious History of the American People, 423.

with a Presbytery or a Congregational Association fell to the congregation. Under the Plan, Presbyteries tended to absorb the more independent Congregational churches, and most churches organized under the Plan of Union became Presbyterian. Still, the Congregationalist Hopkinsians sent more missionaries to the frontier than did the Presbyterians and their voluntary associations supported them. Many Presbyterians were eager to use the Congregationalist missionary zeal in order to plant Presbyterian churches on the frontier.[37] Of course, this left the Presbyterians open to the influences of Hopkinsianism, but by 1801, Hopkinsianism and orthodoxy in New England were one and the same. A powerful Massachusetts missionary machine was emerging as Old Light Congregationalists joined with the Hopkinsians in a combined effort to evangelize the frontier.[38] The Presbyterians benefited from this Congregationalist missionary impulse, which funneled Congregational ministers and money into frontier Presbyterian churches.

One student of Nathaniel Emmons, Leonard Woods, exercised a tremendous influence in the growth of benevolent societies and Congregationalist missionary activities. Although educated by Emmons in Franklin, Massachusetts, Leonard Woods saw defending Hopkinsianism as less important than battling Unitarians. Unitarians in New England questioned the traditional Christian belief in the Trinity. In his effort to preserve Trinitarianism in New England, Woods drew together the Congregationalists

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[36] Marsden, Evangelical Mind, 11.

[37] Ahlstrom explains how the Plan of Union worked for the benefit of Presbyterians while providing an outlet for Congregationalist Hopkinsian zeal. However, the Plan also left the Presbyterians open to theological invasion, first by Hopkinsians and later by the Taylorites of the New Haven School. Ahlstrom, Religious History of the American People, 430.

[38] Ahlstrom discusses the initial efforts of Congregationalists Jedidiah Morse at forming an orthodox Trinitarian coalition to combat Unitarian theology in New England. The Unitarians taught that there were not three persons in the godhead. It was the coalition of Trinitarians who founded Andover Seminary where Leonard Woods served as professor of theology. Religious History of the American People, 394.

who still held to traditional theology to work for common causes. By 1808 Woods succeeded in uniting the Old Light Congregationalists and the Hopkinsians and in consolidating their missionary organizations and journals.

While Woods built his powerful Congregationalist machine, he served as the pastor of Second Congregationalist Church in Newbury, Massachusetts, where a young man named Charles Coffin sat listening to sermons. As a result of Woods's enthusiasm, Coffin eventually became convinced that he should carry the gospel to the frontier in East Tennessee. Though Woods never became a missionary himself, he educated and encouraged young ministers like Coffin to go to the West. Later, in 1808, Woods left Newbury and accepted the position of Professor of Christian Theology at the newly-organized Andover Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts, where he remained for the next thirty-eight years urging young Congregationalist ministers into frontier pastorates and forming voluntary societies to ensure their support.[39]

The Congregationalists of New England, under the influence of a religious awakening at the close of the eighteenth century, stood ready to christianize America. Edwards opened the mind of the human to receive the light of divine truth. Hopkins opened the heart of the believer to be cleansed of self love. Emmons gave the Christian responsibility for his own actions. And his student, Leonard Woods, organized a massive missionary machine capable of carrying the New Divinity to areas traditionally occupied by Presbyterians.

During the 1780s, the New Side Presbyterian ministers of Virginia led a different

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[39] William Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 4 vols. (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), 2:439.

type of revival. In the years during and immediately following the American Revolution, it became increasingly clear to Presbyterians that there was a great poverty of religion in the South and West. Although Virginia and North Carolina experienced brief and local periods of religious revival, those revivals did not exert the widespread influence of similar occurrences in New England. Not until 1785 did North Central Virginia begin to experience a major revival.[40]

The meetings of the Virginia revivals of the late 1780s proved more emotional than those of the Second Great Awakening in the East. Some convicted sinners fell to the floor in sorrow for their sins while others lost use of their muscles. Some went into violent convulsions, while others tossed their heads to and fro. Ministers focused on the sinner's need for conversion, much as Edwards had, but the goal of the Virginia revival of the late 1700s was not to lead the sinner to a greater participation in the church community through a covenant. The goal of the new revival was to convert sinners. The preachers in Virginia presented fiery sermons designed to evoke emotional responses from unrepentant people. Those in New England urged their hearers to spread Christ's love to society. Instigated more by Methodists than by Puritans, the religion the Virginia revival fostered was practical, provincial, and individualistic.[41]

The religious revival that began in Virginia in 1785 peaked in 1787 and 1788. Spreading first among Methodists and Baptists, the surge in religious interest soon affected the Presbyterians. A revival at the New Side Presbyterian Hampden-Sydney College began among students influenced by the Methodists and later spread under the

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[40] Boles, The Great Revival, 7.

forceful preaching of the president, John Blair Smith. As Smith and his subordinates preached, the revival spread to nearby congregations and eventually to surrounding counties. The revival soon embraced ministerial students at Liberty Hall (later Washington and Lee), under the direction of William Graham. By 1789, the Virginia revival created enough excitement among believers and ministers to ensure the revivals continued in spurts until the 1820s.[42]

The Virginia revival affected one particular minister who altered the beginning phases of the Great Revival in Kentucky in the early 1800's. In August 1788, a new minister, James McGready, traveled home to North Carolina from the meeting of Redstone Presbytery in Pennsylvania. On his way, McGready passed through the area of the Virginia revivals. While he was staying at Hampden-Sydney College, the forceful revivalistic preaching of President John Blair Smith impressed McGready and convinced him of the need to take the revival to the frontier. After preaching for several years in his native North Carolina, McGready went west in 1796. On his way to Logan County, Kentucky, McGready stopped in Knoxville, Tennessee, and preached for several months. By the time McGready visited East Tennessee, his revivalistic techniques were by no means foreign to the people. Another son of the Virginia revival had long been influential in the region.[43] The Reverend Samuel Doak, after graduating from Princeton in 1775, studied theology for two years at Hampden-Sydney College under President

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[41] Ibid., 129.

[42] Ibid., 8. On the revival in Virginia, see also Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 274-320. Isaac argues that when the Great Revival came to Virginia in 1804, it only served only to institutionalize bold forms of religious behavior that existed there since the 1750s.

John Blair Smith and then continued his studies under William Graham at Liberty Hall. In the 1770s, Doak settled in East Tennessee, near Greeneville, and by the 1780s became a respected pastor. Although Doak left both Virginia colleges years before the excitement, his connection with Smith and Graham persisted. Doak brought the Virginia revival initiated by men like Graham and Smith to Tennessee.[44] Although Smith did not encourage the extreme emotionalism seen in the Virginia revival, Doak did, and he even experienced some strange manifestations of it himself.[45]

The Virginia style of revivalism that Doak brought to Tennesse was broadly evangelical in nature and practical and individualistic in its thrust. It therefore differed from the revivals of the Second Great Awakening that occurred in New England. The Virginia revival began among Methodists and sought the conversion of sinners while New England's began among Congregationalists and sought the reform of society. The Second Great Awakening emphasized one's obligation to the community while Virginia's revival, as well as its manifestations in Kentucky and Tennessee, emphasized one's need for a personal and profound conversion experience. Northern Congregationalists hoped to preserve the new Republic by protecting it from sin, while southern evangelicals hoped to save a role for themselves in a society that did not understand their emotional religious practices. By gradually accommodating society's

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[43] John B. Boles, The Great Revival,38.

[44] William Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 4 vols, (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), 3:394.

[45] Ibid., 396.

values, Southern revivalistic Presbyterians hoped to win the souls of individual sinners.[46] By working for the reform of society, Northern Congregationalists hoped to create a better America. By the 1860's the reforming revivalism of New England clashed with the accommodating revivalism of the South.

The issue of slavery marked one difference between northern and southern evangelicalism. Hopkins himself pointed to the evils involved in the slave trade and so did his followers. Beginning in the 1790s, the New Divinity men, made slavery a major focus of their reform efforts. By the 1860s, this group of evangelicals found themselves at odds with southern evangelicals. One group of Christians tried to abolish slavery to protect the Union, while the other sought to protect the slaveholder in order to save his soul. When Southern evangelicals finally decided to take up a social cause, they focused on preserving the slaveholder's order.[47]

East Tennessee is unique because before the Civil War reforming and accommodating revivalism existed in the same geographic area among Presbyterians. . The two types of eighteenth-century religious revivals, northern and southern, created two types of Presbyterianism in East Tennessee. The needs of the frontier invited the investment of the Congregationalists of New England, who sent a missionary, Charles Coffin, to the West. Coffin formed benevolent organizations that worked for the reform of society. By the 1860s, New England's investment in East Tennessee meant the

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[46] Christine Heyrman argues that southern evangelicals at the end of the eighteenth century, "Nothing meant more to them than reclaiming white souls, and nearly any concession to the South's ruling race could be justified in the name of that end." Southern Cross, 76.

[47] John B. Boles, "Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance," in Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., Religion in the South (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 30.

presence of a group of Presbyterians opposed to slavery and anxious to support the cause of the Union. On the other hand, there were also Presbyterians who, in a desire to accommodate the values of Southern society, took up the cause of the slaveholder.

CHAPTER II

Hezekiah Balch and the Great Hopkinsian Grandstand

In 1782, a Princeton educated Presbyterian minister named Hezekiah Balch moved with his family to the area that later became Greene County, Tennessee. Although he initially befriended Samuel Doak, a local minister who had studied theology with John Blair Smith and William Graham in Virginia, Balch and Doak soon became bitter enemies. Hoping to meet the need for educated Presbyterian ministers on the frontier, both men founded log colleges and began seeking financial support for their schools. The search led Hezekiah Balch to New England where he found Hopkinsians ready to invest in theological education in the Southwest. After Balch received and adopted Hopkinsianism, a theological controversy erupted and two factions emerged in the Presbyterian church in East Tennessee. These two groups of Presbyterians represented two different expressions of American revivalism—one that sought society's reform, and another that sought its acceptance.[1] Hopkinsians like Balch and Charles Coffin brought the social consciousness of New England's Second Great Awakening to

[1] T. Scott Miyakawa, Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier (Chicago:The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 30. Miyakawa points out that the Presbyterian emphasis on a doctrinally informed membership implied a relatively rigid creedal statement and polity. Many controversies rose from this unwillingness to adapt to conditions on the frontier and hindered the Presbyterians' ability to advance as quickly as Methodists and Baptists. Those Presbyterians wishing to use revivalistic techniques found themselves at odds with more orthodox ministers.

Miyakawa, 178, also discusses the difference between the revivalism that focused on saving souls that grew up in the South and the revivalism of New England and the Northwest that urged members into social action, 178. In East Tennessee, where not only the ecstatic revivalism of Virginia but also the socially minded revivalism of New England influenced Presbyterians, one questions whether anyone was orthodox. There, two groups of New Side evangelicals battled against each other.

Tennessee, while Samuel Doak and others encouraged individualism by employing the methods of the South's Great Revival. Significant theological differences separated the two Presybterianisms, and the West's need for theological schools lay at the root of the division.

Samuel Doak's log college, Martin Academy, received its charter from the North Carolina legislature in 1783. Though Greeneville College did not receive its charter until 1794, Hezekiah Balch began teaching there before 1785.[2] Doak's Martin Academy attained collegiate status in 1795 and became Washington College. Initially, Samuel Doak and Hezekiah Balch cooperated in their religious and educational endeavors. In 1783, Doak named Balch, along with Presbyterian minister John Crosson, trustees of Martin Academy.[3] In the 1780s the clergy in Abingdon Presbytery united in their desire to educate young ministers and advance their religion on the frontier. But the situation soon changed.[4] Educating pastors required financial support, and Presbyterians in East Tennessee obtained money for education only with great difficulty. As a result, competition for educational funding, and the consequent involvement of New England's

[2] Howard Ernest Carr, Washington College: A Study of an Attempt to Provide Higher Education in Eastern Tennessee (Knoxville: S.B. Newman and Company, 1935) Carr maintains that Balch was present at the Franklin Convention at Greeneville on November 18, 1785, to set forth the claims of Greeneville College to be the state's university.

[3] Ibid., Carr claims that Martin Academy, first known as "Dr. Doak's Log College," was the first secondary school west of the mountains. Although Balch received a charter several months before Doak, he did very little college work until 1801.

[4] James X. Corgan, "Toward a History of Higher Education in Antebellum East Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, 68 (Spring 1988):37-66. Corgan points out that social and theological competition between Balch and Doak, beginning in the 1780s, led to a rivalry between Greeneville College and Washington College. One may wonder, however, whether the rivalry between the two colleges caused the strife between the two men.

Congregationalists, soon drove a wedge between the Presbyterian ministers of East Tennessee.

The competition for public funding for their log colleges led Balch and Doak into conflict. By 1785, although Greeneville College had yet to receive its charter, Hezekiah Balch and Samuel Doak already competed for public funding for their schools. The first great conflict between the two Presbyterians over educational support preceded their first theological dispute by over ten years. Although theological controversy did not surround Balch until 1797, when he became a Hopkinsian, he and Doak clashed over politics as early as 1785 when Washington College almost received the sponsorship of the State of Franklin.

In August of 1784, a convention met in Jonesboro to establish a state west of the mountains to be named "Franklin." Three East Tennessee counties, Washington, Sullivan, and Greene, sent delegates to the convention. Two Presbyterian ministers, Samuel Doak and Sam Houston, attended the convention as delegates, as did one of the elders at Doak's church, John Sevier. After founding Franklin in 1784, the group met again in Jonesboro in November of 1785 to vote on the state's constitution. The Reverend Samuel Houston presented a manuscript he had prepared with the aid of several friends, including Rev. William Graham. Graham, the President of Liberty Hall Academy in Virginia (later Hampden-Sydney College), mentored Doak, Houston, and several other delegates.[5]

The draft of the constitution provided for a state university. It demanded that "the future legislators erect before the year 1787, one university which shall be near the center

[5] Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1974), 95.

of the state."[6] Doak's Martin Academy, known as the first log college in Tennessee and located near the center of the state, seemed a logical choice to serve as the foundation for such an institution. The constitution further provided lands for the endowment of the university and designated one fourth of the money gained from land surveys to fund the institution. The state would also levy a tax for its support: "one half-penny on every pound of inspected indigo that shall be carried out of the state; three pence on every barrel of flour and one shilling on every hogshead of tobacco."[7]

As Reverend Samuel Doak anxiously awaited the vote that would turn his log college into a state university with clear Presbyterian sympathies, fellow educator and pastor Hezekiah Balch rose and challenged the constitution. Because of Balch's passionate speech against the document, the convention rejected the constitution by a small minority and opted for a form of the North Carolina constitution already in use.[8] Houston, Graham, and Doak blamed Balch for the defeat of their constitution. This band of Presbyterian ministers soon carried the political strife into the church courts.

Public feeling over Franklin's constitution intensified as the population took sides. At one point, a group of people opposing the constitution burned an effigy of Graham. When Graham heard of this, he blamed Balch and promptly published a bitter open letter to him. In response, Balch called Graham to answer before the Abingdon Presbytery and then the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. In the summer of 1787, a committee of the General Assembly listened to the concerns of a group from

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[6] Draft of the Constitution of the State of Franklin, as quoted in Carr, Washington College, 3
[7] Carr, Washington College, 3.

[8] Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin, 97.

Abingdon Presbytery about the political differences that divided the church. The committee made the motion that the Assembly absolve Hezekiah Balch from any guilt in the matter of the effigy burning and that it instruct Lexington Presbytery to censure Graham if indeed he was responsible for the anti-Balch pamphlet.[9]

As directed by the assembly, Lexington Presbytery heard the case of Graham. Graham admitted to writing the pamphlet against Balch but also produced witnesses testifying to Balch's instigation of effigy burnings of Graham and Reverend Samuel Houston. Graham convinced the presbytery that his anger toward Balch had been justified, and the court issued the following response to the General Assembly: "The presbytery . . . on mature deliberation, agree that although they could wish that Mr. Graham had been more temperate in his satire and more gentle in his expostulations, yet that the treatment he met with was so grossly injurious, they cannot suppose him to merit a formal censure of this presbytery, on account of said letter."[10]

Neither Graham nor Balch ever apologized. The competition for educational funding thus raged on in East Tennessee with the fuel of political bipartisanship adding to its fury. Although the State of Franklin ceased to exist in 1788, the excitement over the constitutional controversy continued in church courts for many years. The Franklin controversy alienated Balch from his fellow ministers in Tennessee, including Doak. It also drove a wedge between him and the Presbyterians in Virginia, such as Graham and John Blair Smith, prominent educators who could have helped him gain support for his

[9] Samuel J. Baird, ed.,Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judiciaries of the Presbyterian Church from its Origin in America to the Present Time, (Philadelphia; Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1856), 537.

[10] Ibid., 613-614.

college.[11] As a result, Balch had to look to New England's Hopkinsians for funding. A later contemporary, Samuel J. Baird, suggested that the political strife surrounding Franklin served as a foundation for the Hopkinsian controversy that followed ten years later in Abingdon Presbytery.[12]

To Balch and Doak, the constitutional controversy centered less on politics than on educational funding. Although questions about Franklin's constitution evaporated with the state, the problem of finding money for higher education in East Tennessee continued. Political strife gave way to religious warfare when the two clergymen turned from the state to the church in their quest. The search for ecclesiastical support of his college led Balch to the Hopkinsians of New England. When he brought the theology of disinterested benevolence back to Tennessee, controversy among local Presbyterians followed.

In 1795, before Balch gave up on the government and went to New England, the Trustees of Greeneville College made a last attempt to secure public funding, this time from the federal government. In a letter addressed to President George Washington, the trustees described their efforts to provide a college in East Tennessee so young men could acquire a proper education close to home. In their plea for money, they confessed: "we have no fund to carry into effect the intent of the act incorporating the college of which

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[11] Samuel Doak had not only received his theological education from John Blair Smith at Hampden Sydney, but he also continued it under William Graham at Liberty Hall and married Esther H. Montgomery, the daughter of a Liberty Hall professor, Rev. John Montgomery. Thus Doak was not connected to those who led the Virginia revivals of the 1780s and 1790s through friendship, as well as by marriage. When Hezekiah Balch made enemies of Doak and Graham, he severed relations with the revivalistic Virginia Presbyterian establishment. On Doak's connection to the Virginia revivals see William Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 4 vols., (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), 3:394.

[12] Baird ed., Acts and Deliverances, 614.

we are trustees."[13] In hopes of obtaining support, they also sent letters to the Senate and House. The trustees implored Washington, "We pray you Worthy Sir who we consider the guardian of our common happiness, to grant your assistance and patronage to the end that the object of the said memorial may be for us obtained."[14] The appeal of the trustees for gaining funding from the U.S. government proved fruitless. In desperation, Balch finally went to the North in 1795 and found support, not among Presbyterians, but among Congregationalists.

A theological controversy that resulted from Balch's cooperation with Congregationalists exacerbated tensions among Presbyterians in early East Tennessee. In 1795, when Hezekiah Balch traveled from his home in Greeneville, Tennessee, to Philadelphia and New England to raise funds for his college, he found Congregationalists eager to assist growing Presbyterian institutions on the frontier and ready to influence their leaders with the theology of disinterested benevolence. The 1801 Plan of Union that joined Presbyterians with Congregationalists in missionary endeavors opened the door for tremendous Congregationalist influence in the Presbyterian Church. By the time the plan was in force, the Congregationalists had already begun to assert their Hopkinsian zeal for missions in the official bodies and boards of the church.[15]

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[13] Trustees of Greeneville College to George Washington, 17 March 1795., quoted in Carr, Washington College, 4.
[14] Ibid.

[15] Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, 3 vols., (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), 1:351-76. Thompson discusses how the Plan of Union that began with the agreement with the Connecticut Association in 1801 opened the door for Congregationalist involvement in the South. Beginning in 1801, Presbyterian churches accepted any Congregationalist minister, although only the Connecticut Association accepted Congregationalists until agreements had been made with other associations. Thompson points out that most of the men who developed highly successful missions among native Americans in the South were Congregational ministers from New England who had been accepted by Southern Presbyteries.

Congregationalists and Presbyterians shared resources as well as a common religious mission. On his trip to New England, Balch succeeded in collecting $1,350 in funds for Greeneville College, $350 in subscriptions, and numerous books for the college library. Much of what he acquired for the Presbyterian school came from Congregationalist benefactors, the new patrons of frontier theological institutions.[16] Balch did not come by this fresh source of educational funding accidentally. Dr. Ashbel Greene of Philadelphia, a prominent Presbyterian minister and an influential member of the General Assembly whom Balch approached for Presbyterian aid for his school, encouraged Balch to seek the audience of the New Divinity men of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Obviously the Hopkinsians had voiced their desire to aid frontier schools, for although Greene was a staunch Calvinist of the Old Side Presbyterian variety, he directed Balch their way. Balch found that even though Greene disagreed with the Hopkinsians, he believed them zealous for the gospel.[17]

Once personal connections between Balch and the Congregationalists bound these ministers and missionaries together, a line of communication remained open through letters and correspondence between New England and Tennessee. With Greene's recommendation and in hopes of finding support for his frontier college, Balch journeyed to New England to meet Samuel Hopkins and Nathaniel Emmons. According to a

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[16] For an account of the early support of educational institutions in East Tennessee, see J. E. Alexander, A Brief History of the Synod of Tennessee from 1817 to 1887 (Philadelphia: MacCalla and Company, 1890). Alexander maintains that the Congregationalist societies that supported several Tennessee colleges came into direct conflict with Presbyterian boards who also had a vested interest in frontier schools. In East Tennessee, Greeneville College and Southern and Western Theological Seminary in Maryville received the most Congregationalist support.

[17] For an account of Balch's meeting with Dr. Greene, see James W. Alexander, The Life of Archibald Alexander (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854) and Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:313.

contemporary, Balch impressed the New England divines with his attention to their theological discourse and his earnest desire to understand the Hopkinsian system. Charles Coffin, whom the Tennessee educator later befriended, wrote about Balch's meeting with Samuel Hopkins and Nathaniel Emmons, "While he was ready to object difficulties to their sentiments, he had the discernment and impartiality to acknowledge greater ones connected with his own; and the desire of improvement and the love of truth were superior in his mind to the prejudice of education, the invectory of habit and the pride of talents." [18]

On his trip, Balch made the acquaintance of Charles Coffin Sr., a physician in Newbury, Massachusetts. Coffin's son studied Hopkinsianism under Dr. Samuel Spring, the pastor of the Congregational church in Newbury to which both Coffin and his father belonged. Balch saw in Charles, with his Hopkinsian yearning to practice disinterested benevolence, a potential professor who might earn his own keep on the frontier. After Balch's visit, Coffin Sr.'s financial support of Greeneville College kept the line of communication open between Newbury and Greeneville and between Charles Coffin Jr. and Hezekiah Balch. Later, when Charles joined Balch on the frontier, the ties that bound East Tennessee to Massachusetts grew stronger and New Divinity men watched to see how their theology fared outside of New England. Eventually, the circle of Tennessee's friends in Massachusetts grew to include one of the great leaders of New

[18] Charles Coffin to the Synod of the Carolinas, October 1801, tells of Balch's initial meeting with the New England divines. Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung Collection of Knox County Public Library. (Hereafter, McClung).

England benevolence when Leonard Woods became the pastor of the church in Newbury in 1798.[19]

The Presbytery of Hanover ordained Balch as an evangelist in 1770. He was at that time an orthodox Presbyterian holding to the theology of the Westminster Confession. That his theology was more consistent with that of the New Side is evident from a mid-1780s controversy in which Balch advocated the use of a new version of the psalter.[20] However, as a result of his visit with the Hopkinsians, Balch rethought his theology and adopted the ideas of his Congregationalist benefactors. Hoping to win the confidence of his new friends in the North, Balch returned from New England teaching the New Divinity.

Hopkins published his System of Doctrines in 1793. Thus when Balch returned from New England in 1795, the theology he brought back seemed new and unfamiliar to frontier Presbyterians. Balch explained his theological transformation by pointing out that while he previously felt himself unable to reconcile the doctrine of man's free will and moral responsibility to God's sovereign choice in predestination, he now found himself completely able to explain the apparent paradox. After understanding the Hopkinsian system he felt prepared to explain the process of salvation and the equal roles God and human will played in the process. Balch later told Charles Coffin about his new-found doctrinal confidence: "I believed more firmly, because more intelligently,

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[19] Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 4:246-7.
[20] Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:309. Both Balch and Doak advocated the use of Watt's version of the psalter instead of Rouse's. This is consistent with the New Side propensity for making innovations in traditional worship. The Presbytery of Hanover, under leaders like Samuel Davies, was a bastion of New Side theology. This explains why they were more accepting of the revivals led by Smith and Graham in the 1880's. They rejected Hopkinsianism which they saw as a step beyond the Westminster standards.

than ever before, the cardinal doctrines of free and sovereign grace, which I had so long preached; I felt myself unable to unfold them, and defend them, in a more consistent manner, and to preach the truth on one topic, without taking it back again, when discussing another."[21]

In an effort to explain his new theology to Presbyterians in East Tennessee and advertise it to Congregationalists in New England, Balch published a clear statement of his new beliefs in the Knoxville Gazette. On 1 August 1796, the newspaper published Balch's Credo. In a simple statement explaining his conversion to the cause of disinterested benevolence, Balch insisted on human responsibility for holiness and articulated his disbelief in the unavoidable effects of Adam's original sin. Balch began by simply stating his belief that all true religion was based on disinterested benevolence. In his mind, disinterested benevolence consisted of loving God first and one's neighbors as oneself.[22] To Balch, charity represented the greatest expression of faith.

As he proceeded with his theological message, Balch blended the teachings of Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Hopkins. In contrast to true holiness as shown in acts of disinterested benevolence, Balch saw all sins as the natural result of self-love rather than the unavoidable legacy of Adam's fall. Such theology was compatible with Hopkins's insistence on self-love as the root of all evil. Balch's Hopkinsianism restated Edwards's conception of the simultaneous passivity and activity of the human will in the conversion process. He wrote in his Credo, "Light and motive are valuable things in conversion, for that is the creator's act, but regeneration is the act of God's spirit, in it the sinner is totally

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[21] Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:314.
[22] The Knoxville Gazette, August 1, 1796 in Special Collections, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

passive."[23] Yet, while insisting on the believer's passivity, Balch's religion stressed individual will: "There cannot be sin without a wrong choice or design. But choice or design, is forever from the heart."[24]

Balch maintained the primacy of the human volition and held on the individual sinner responsible for his actions. Actions motivated by self-love represented sin, while actions motivated by disinterested benevolence were righteous. Balch's theology, like that of Hopkins, perfectly merged freedom and determinism. When the will was empowered to do good or evil, when one's deeds constituted an acceptance or rejection of supernatural light, then what one did to improve the condition of others became the test of election. God foreordained some to accept Christ's salvation. These, through the work of the Holy Spirit, would become more like Him, rejecting self-love and acting only to benefit others.

The doctrinal differences between the Hopkinsians and the traditional Calvinists thus appear small and subtle. In fact, orthodox Calvinists questioned Hopkinsianism because it altered the doctrine of original sin by asserting that man was capable of right or wrong actions on his own. These differences created an enormous conflict in the nation and especially in East Tennessee. Indeed, Balch's brief article caused an ecclesiastical division in Tennessee that lasted for 190 years. The Hopkinsian doctrine generated theological controversies because the social ramifications of the theology of personal

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

responsibility threatened the social and religious order.[25] Therefore, when Balch preached the theology of Hopkins and gained a following among parishioners and preachers, the ecclesiastical and social atmosphere in East Tennessee filled with tension.

Balch and his theology soon stood trial before the church courts. Presbyterians are still, as they were in the eighteenth century, governed by elected individuals called elders or presbyters who gather together in courts. There are two types of elders: ruling elders, who are elected lay people, and teaching elders who are clergy. A session is the gathering of elders that governs the local church. A presbytery consists of all teaching elders, along with ruling elders elected to represent each local church and governs the churches in a certain geographic area. The group of elders elected from each presbytery to govern the presbyteries within a certain region is called a synod. The large group of elders elected to oversee the work of the whole church is called the general assembly. Normally sessions meet monthly, presbyteries meet quarterly, and synods and the general assembly meet annually. All these gatherings of elders are known as courts of the Church, for each has the duty of trying, suspending, excommunicating, or pardoning those accused of wrong doing.

Although Balch's critics hauled him before the church courts numerous times, they never permanently succeeded in removing his ordination. From 1797 until 1810, Balch stood defendant in sixteen trials before the Presbytery, four before the Synod, and one before the General Assembly. His trials served as a platform from which he advertised his theology and Greeneville College among New England Congregationalists.

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[25] Leonard J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949).

A minister could not succeed in escaping permanent deposition (removal from office) through twenty-one trials before three different courts of the Church unless he had a plan, like Balch. Balch would have found no pleasure in continued conflict with the Church courts unless his ongoing agitation earned for him some reward. In addition, one has to wonder why Balch, though often admonished and defrocked, was normally returned to good standing and tolerated. It seems that even those who opposed Balch knew he was trying to gain the favor of Hopkinsians in New England. Had any of the courts wanted to be rid of Balch, they would have permanently deposed him. Balch simply worked the Presbyterian system to his advantage, and the courts knew it.

The controversy generated by Balch's article in the Gazette first assumed large proportions in Abington Presbytery. On 6 September 1796, about a month after Balch published his Credo, Abingdon Presbytery assembled itself for a special meeting. The minutes state the meeting's purpose: "Finding the minds of the people throughout our churches have been considerable agitated [by Balch's article], therefore Presbytery agreed to hear and converse with Mr. Balch respecting his sentiments therein."[26] Balch apologized to Abingdon Presbytery for publishing his creed and for reading it in Mount Bethel Church and in Presbytery. In light of his apology, the Presbytery ruled in Balch's first case that he did not hold doctrines essentially different from those in the Westminster Confession. Whatever Balch believed, it did not threaten the faith of his parishioners or the Christian mission of evangelism. Initially, the Presbytery adopted a peaceful attitude toward Hopkinsianism, stating that the contending sides would exercise

[26] Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, Ninth Session, Nov. 1796. 188. In Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, NC.

patience with each other regarding their differences until they understood each other better.[27]

Although the court exonerated Balch, the tension between him and his accusers intensified. At his first trial, fellow ministers Samuel Doak, Edward Crawford, and even Balch's son, James, voted against his acquittal.[28] The next day, these preachers along with Charles Cummings and Jacob Lake withdrew from Abingdon Presbytery to form the Independent Presbytery of Abingdon, citing as their reason, "the alarming situation in the church occasioned principally by the new creeds and doctrines delivered from the pulpit and published in the Knoxville Gazette."[29] Geographic necessity caused most splits in Presbyteries and Synods before 1800. As the frontier expanded, so did the distance that separated churches and pastors from each other. Abingdon Presbytery split from Hanover Presbytery in 1785 after Balch and his fellow ministers petitioned for the Presbytery's formation. It was difficult for preachers in Southwest Virginia and Tennessee to attend Presbytery meetings.[30] Yet in 1796, Abingdon Presbytery split over Hezekiah Balch.

In a letter to the Synod of the Carolinas, Samuel Doak informed the court that unless it or the General Assembly took action against Balch, the Independent Presbytery of Abingdon would form a separate Presbyterian denomination. In answer to the letter,

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Samuel Doak, though holding to the Westminster standards was not a strict Old Side subscriptionist and joined in the revivalistic excesses, including "the jerks," that became associated with the Great Revival in Kentucky. See Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:396. James Balch, on the other hand, while holding to the Confession, was a great enemy of revivalistic excesses. James McGready, the Presbyterian leader of the Kentucky revival, called James Balch "the devil" because of the opposition he constantly offered McGready and his preaching. See John B. Boles, The Great Revival, 48.

[29] Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, Ninth Session, Nov. 1796. 188.

[30] Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, 1:353.

the Synod of the Carolinas, in its November meeting of 1796, threatened Doak and the members of the Independent Presbytery with excommunication and ordered them to answer for their actions at a meeting of Abingdon Presbytery. While ostensibly an effort to regain its lost members, that meeting apparently also included a new assault on Balch, because the members of the Independent Presbytery of Abingdon remained unwilling to rejoin their former court even though the Synod in 1797 appointed a commission to hear new charges against the Greeneville Hopkinsian.

On 21 November of 1797, over a year after Balch's article appeared in the Knoxville Gazette, a commission from the Synod of the Carolinas met at Mt. Bethel Church and heard his case. In an effort to avoid dealing with sensitive issues of theology, the commission referred the case to the General Assembly. However, to regain the members of the Independent Presbytery of Abingdon, the commission dismissed Balch from Mount Bethel Church.[31]

Because of the Hopkinsian controversy, the Synod of the Carolinas divided Abingdon Presbytery at the end of 1797. The anti-Hopkinsians remained in Abingdon Presbytery while the Synod formed the Hopkinsians into Union Presbytery. One might think that since the anti-Hopkinsian coalition successfully secured Balch's removal from his position at Mt. Bethel that the Hopkinsian and his friends lost influence with the Presbyterians of East Tennessee. But, in giving Balch the opportunity to answer charges before the General Assembly in Philadelphia, the Synod opened a window through which

[31] Ibid., 353-4. That the Commission was mostly concerned about preserving the peace in Abingdon Presbytery is evidenced by the fact that , on petition to the General Assembly, the commission recommended that the Hopkinsians be placed together in a new Presbytery, called Union.

the Hopkinsians of New England viewed the struggles of one of the New Divinity men in East Tennessee.

The Synod of the Carolinas sent the great Hopkinsian controversy of East Tennessee far away to Philadelphia for a resolution. The atmosphere in Tennessee proved too tense to yield a peaceful compromise. Balch returned home thankful for having been made a hero before the Congregationalists in the Assembly. Again a trial earned Balch favor in the eyes of New England Congregationalists who wished to invest in schools in the West. At its May 1798 meeting, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, with Congregational ministers present, appointed a committee to hear Balch's case. When the committee returned a report on Balch's creed, it pointed out three particular points that it considered inconsistent with the Confession, all of which had to do with the doctrine of original sin.[32] The accusation of error came only after the committee considered the creed in light of several of Balch's rash Hopkinsian statements.[33]

When the court adjourned for the evening, a charge of heresy and a formal censure seemed impending, but disciplining Balch presented problems. Had the General Assembly sought to condemn a Hopkinsian, it would have caused a schism in the church, since, even before the Plan of Union, Congregationalists could sit as voting members in

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[32] Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, May 1798, Meeting at Philadelphia, in Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, NC.

[33] In a charge that reflected the heart of his theology, accusers alleged that Balch denied the doctrine of original sin. He allegedly preached false doctrine in that he asserted that no one had ever gone to hell for original sin. In a sermon, Balch said that he "designed to slash the doctrines held by the Church of Scotland, and some of our Calvinist divines—that there were infants in hell not a span long." In conversation with one Lewis Jordan, Balch said that he "would be willing to accept all of the original sin of the whole world upon his shoulders, Adam excepted." Minutes of the Commission of the Synod of the Carolinas, Nov. 21, 1797. Meeting at Mt. Bethel Church. In Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, NC.

the Assembly. However the Assembly came to a compromise and acquitted Balch after admonishing him for what it considered careless words.[34]

Of course Balch was ecstatic at the publicity that his defense in Philadelphia brought him. His words were not careless, but well-engineered. He welcomed the continued controversy in East Tennessee as long as that controversy generated support from the Hopkinsians of New England. Soon after his appearance before the General Assembly, Balch again found himself the subject of heresy charges. The Session of Balch's own Mount Bethel Church brought charges before the Synod of the Carolinas in October of 1798. The new complaint would have been more properly made to Balch's own Union Presbytery, but it, being composed of Hopkinsians would have rejected the complaint. Two of the charges rose from Balch's having continued to preach at Mount Bethel after the Synod had removed him. Three more accused him of lying and denying outlandish things he said before his congregation.[35] The Synod of the Carolinas found Balch guilty on all charges and removed him from the Gospel ministry, "until such a time as he is reformed."[36] Balch's primary stage was the church courts; news from the courts always reached the Congregationalists and encouraged philanthropy.

Balch could not have been back in hot water sooner had he planned it. Indeed, he did plan it. By 1708, Balch should have remained silent on sensitive issues at least for a

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[34] Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:316.

[35] Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, October 1798. Meeting at Mt. Bethel Church. In Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, NC. Balch had allegedly stated, "If original sin is conveyed to posterity, it would be a damnable sin for a man to get his wife with child." He had also said that he had returned from General Assembly "fifty times stronger in his [Hopkinsian] convictions."

[36] Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, October 1798. Meeting at Mt. Bethel Church. In Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, NC.

time. He did not. The apparent persecution of Balch and his Hopkinsian theology earned the sympathy of those with similar beliefs in New England, and it continued to generate funding for Greeneville College. Balch embraced the New Divinity while raising money for his college, and through trial after trial before the church courts, he continued to use his theology to link his East Tennessee college to Massachusetts benevolence. Balch's trials disturbed Presbyterianism in East Tennessee to the extent that eventually the Synod of the Carolinas placed him in his own Presbytery. In 1799, after a geographical restructuring of Union Presbytery moved Balch back into the Abingdon Presbytery, the anti-Hopkinsians in that court again defrocked him.

After his expulsion, Union Presbytery appealed to the Synod of the Carolinas for the formation of a new Presbytery, almost custom-designed to contain Balch and his penchant for conflict. Wary of Balch's renewed war with Abingdon Presbytery, in 1800 the Synod formed Greeneville Presbytery with four ministers: Hezekiah Balch, John Crosson, George Newton, and Samuel Davies. Greeneville Presbytery existed only four years as a memorial to the great Hopkinsian controversy, and gained only one additional pastor. In 1804, the Synod dissolved the Presbytery after three of the five members moved westward.[37] In 1804, Greeneville Presbytery reunited with Union Presbytery and Balch, through a brilliant bit of maneuvering, moved back into friendly ecclesiastical territory. To protect itself from the Hopkinsian harangues of Balch, Abingdon Presbytery petitioned the General Assembly in 1803 to be moved from the Synod of the Carolinas to the Synod of Virginia.

[37] According to Alexander, A Brief History of the Synod of Tennessee, of the five ministers who were members of Greeneville Presbytery in 1804, George Newton and Samuel Davies were transferred to the Presbytery of Concord, Balch and Crosson to Union, and John V. Bovell to the Presbytery of West Lexington.

As a result of the great Hopkinsian controversy of East Tennessee, Balch won his prize: the hearts of the New Divinity men. He approached his Hopkinsian benefactors in New England with battle scars. He wrote to Charles Coffin, Sr. in Newbury, "I have met with a great deal of opposition from a number of ministers since my return from New England . . . and everything that was done against me convinced me, and confirmed to me more and more, that they system of precious truth as held by the Hopkinsians is right."[38]

Balch won support for his college, but perhaps the greatest benefit of the new theology for East Tennessee was that it created a trans-Appalachian community of saints earnestly desiring that their new country reap the benefits of the New Divinity. Through the minutes of the Church courts and letters ministers sent between Tennessee and New England, Congregationalists received news of Balch and his defense of New England's theology. Eventually the Congregationalists came to believe that if Balch could influence Tennesseans with the New Divinity, they might transplant their own culture over the mountains. The revivals of the 1790s in New England sought to transform society; through the trials of Hezekiah Balch, this revivalistic reform came to Tennessee.

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[38] Balch to Charles Coffin, 15 April 1800, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

CHAPTER III

Charles Coffin and Northern Benevolence Societies in East Tennessee

Hezekiah Balch's Hopkinsian grandstand in Tennessee was a fundraising campaign aimed at Massachusetts at a time when New England Congregationalists, motivated by a theology of disinterested benevolence, sought to claim their share of the southern frontier. When he first went north in 1795, Balch opened a channel of communications that drew northern Congregationalists into the lives of Presbyterians in East Tennessee. In 1800, Charles Coffin, a friend of many influential Hopkinsians in Massachusetts, joined Balch in his work at Greeneville College and brought with him the investment of New England in the West. One of Coffin's associates, Leonard Woods, founded many benevolent societies, including the American Education Society, that willingly sent money to East Tennessee in hopes of creating a Christian America. New England's investment in early East Tennessee ensured the presence of socially minded Presbyterians who themselves adopted the theology of disinterested benevolence.

In the early 1800s, evangelicals in New England believed that they could shape the United States into a Christian nation, and they saw the southern Appalachian highlands as a place particularly in need of their influence.[1] Evangelicals in the North

[1] Richard J. Carwardine, Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 110-3. Though Carwardine primarily deals with a later time period, he points out that any New School Presbyterian leaders in the North, especially during the 1830's, saw Tennessee and

willingly invested in such schools as Greeneville College because they saw themselves as the divinely appointed keepers of order in America.[2] By sending money to the frontier, the Hopkinsians of the North hoped to transplant their vision of a godly, prosperous society to the hills of Tennessee. They wanted to create a moral and spiritual environment in the West similar to that of New England. As the Hopkinsians pursued their work, they came to influence the frontier not only through their investment in educational institutions such as Greeneville College, but also through benevolent societies.[3]

That the Hopkinsians of New England saw the frontier as a mission field especially in need of their influence derived from their communal social ideas. In Errand Into the Wilderness, Perry Miller contrasts the Puritan conception of individualism to the one developing in America during the 1800s on the frontier:

> There was, it is true, a strong element of individualism in the Puritan creed; every man had to work out his own salvation, each soul had to face his maker alone. But at the same time, the Puritan philosophy

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western North Carolina as "the El Dorado of America" requiring only investment and internal improvements to realize tremendous economic potential.

[2] John Bodo, The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues: 1812-1848 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954). Bodo argues that the theocrats of the early republic took as their mission the protection and formation of a godly society. Their conviction that only a godly society could succeed was the direct result of their Hopkinsian theology. The vehicle for the protection of America became the volunteer society. See also, Charles C. Cole, The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists: 1826-1860 (New York: Octagon, 1966) Cole asserts that the revivals of the Second Great Awakening and the volunteer societies that came as a result diverted revolutionary tendencies in the country to more fruitful methods of social reform than violence and rebellion.

[3] Clifford Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1960). Griffin studied eight volunteer societies including the Sunday School Union, the Education and Home Missionary Societies, the Bible Society, the Tract Society, and the temperance, peace and antislavery societies. He sees those first reformers as standing at the end of an era. With the waning of Federalism, the Congregationalists of New England worried about the future of the nation and decided that if they could no longer make men and women behave through political action they would persuade them with reform societies. Griffin maintains that the leaders of these societies knew two worlds: the American Republic and the Kingdom of God. They sought to make the former reflect the glory of the latter.

> demanded that in society all men, at least all regenerate men, be marshaled into one united array. The lone horseman, the single trapper, the solitary hunter was not a figure of the Puritan frontier. The theorists of New England thought of society as a unit, bound together by inviolable ties; they thought of it not as an aggregation of individuals but as an organism.[4]

With such a conception of society, it is not surprising that New England's theologians considered East Tennessee within their sphere of responsibility. When the fires of revival rekindled after the American Revolution, the descendants of the Puritans stressed more than an individual's need for conversion, and the Church committed itself to the production of a regenerate society.

John B. Boles, in The Great Revival, claims that the southern frontier produced a Christianity that concentrated more on the conversion of sinners than on the salvation of society. Boles writes, "The fundamental emphasis was individualistic. Though they recognized that the final result of effective preaching would be the approximation of a Christianized social order, this was not their self-conceived role. The communal thrust was subordinated to the personal."[5] This individualistic thrust of Southern evangelicalism created a void of social and religious involvement that the Congregationalists of New England readily filled by investing in religious colleges and benevolent societies.

Eventually the Congregationalists of New England succeeded in planting reform evangelicalism in East Tennessee because of the unwillingness of people on the frontier to organize themselves for their own religious causes. Charles Coffin Jr., a New

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[4] Miller, Errand Into the Wilderness, 143.

[5] Boles, The Great Revival, 125.

Divinity man from New England, brought reform revivalism to the frontier to meet this need. Coffin was only fourteen years old in 1789 when he began his studies at Harvard College. He intended to follow in his father's footsteps as a physician, and studied medicine after he graduated in 1793. While Coffin studied to be a doctor, he and his father attended the Newburyport, Massachusetts, Congregational Church led by Dr. Samuel Spring.

Coffin's association with Spring united him to the tightly-knit circle of prominent Hopkinsians in New England, including Hopkins himself. After receiving theological training at Princeton in 1771, Spring continued his studies under Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy, another Hopkinsian divine. Furthermore, Spring married Hopkins's daughter, Hannah, who joined him in Newburyport. Throughout his life, Spring also remained a close friend of Nathaniel Emmons whose theological work Spring admired. In 1808, Spring founded Andover Theological Seminary and called his close associate, Leonard Woods, to join him as professor of theology. Doubtless, Charles Coffin Jr., drank deeply of the New Divinity during his theological education under Spring and during his later association with Leonard Woods, whom Coffin knew when Woods led the church at Newburyport. All of his Hopkinsian teachers encouraged Coffin's efforts in exercising disinterested benevolence.

After the Essex Middle Association of the Congregationalist church licensed Coffin to preach in May 1799, he left New England to journey southward. Although he initially left the North in part because of health problems, Coffin also hoped to make his

way to Tennessee to visit Hezekiah Balch.[6] Coffin spent the winter of 1800 preaching in Norfolk, Virginia. When spring came he wrote to the fondly-remembered acquaintance asking permission to visit. In reply, Balch took the opportunity to pour out his soul and recount to Coffin all of his Hopkinsian troubles—how his defense of Hopkinsianism had taken a great toll on his college and forced him to send his students home. Finally he urged the young licentiate, "Come over, Sir, and I hope God will so order it that you will fall in love with our country." When Coffin arrived at Balch's gate in July 1800, the old schoolmaster's eyes filled with tears and he said, "I believe, Sir, there is a God in Heaven who hears prayer."[7] New England benevolence had arrived in Tennessee. But to Coffin's surprise, few cared.

Coffin found that the majority of East Tennesseans remained ignorant of the doctrines of Hopkins. In February 1801, Coffin preached at the church of an older Presbyterian, Colonel J.G. Ramsay, whom Coffin found to be "distant from the subject of Hopkinsian divinity."[8] Soon after leaving Greeneville to return to New England, Coffin visited Colonel Arthur Campbell and his brother, John, in Abingdon, Virginia, two potential benefactors for the college, and surmised that they, too, understood little of Hopkins's theology.[9] After Coffin preached to a crowd of 100 people in Abingdon, he met with the Reverend James Bovell in his home. He wrote about Bovell, "He and his friends wish Mr. Balch to spend a fortnight among them . . . he has much of the

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[6] William Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:312.
[7] Ibid., 313.

[8] Journal of Charles Coffin, 3 February 1801, McClung.

[9] Journal of Charles Coffin, 28 April 1801, McClung.

Hopkinsian theory yet to learn."[10] Coffin found that those most familiar with the theology of disinterested benevolence knew how Hopkins' teaching differed from traditional Calvinism and thought it heresy.[11] In 1800, when Coffin arrived in East Tennessee, few ministers cared about the New Divinity or what Massachusetts benevolence might offer them.

Hezekiah Balch learned of Hopkins's theology only because he needed the Hopkinsians' support for his college. His need resulted from the South's resistance to evangelicalism and its colleges. In 1800, most of the population in Tennessee was wary of evangelical religion. In Southern Cross, Christine Leigh Heyrman describes the indifference, if not hostility, of most Southerners toward evangelical religion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. According to the most generous estimate, only one-fifth of all Southerners belonged to Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian churches by 1810. Less than half of the Southern population regularly attended evangelical services

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[10] It seems that even those conducting Balch's trial before the Synod of the Carolinas didn't know enough about the New Divinity to determine exactly what Balch claimed. Coffin discovered this fact at Mr. Bovell's house, much to his surprise. "He read me an account which he took of Mr. Balch's trial before the Synod of the Carolinas. Stupid questions and wise answers made up the greater part of it." Journal of Charles Coffin, 23 April 1801, McClung..

[11] Of all of the ministers in East Tennessee besides Balch, the one who knew the most about the Hopkinsian system was Samuel Doak, the main defender of traditional Calvinism in Greeneville. Doak understood Hopkinsianism and he taught those under his charge to defend orthodoxy. Several days after his encounter with Bovell in Abingdon, Coffin met with John Doak, the son of Samuel Doak, in Wytheville, Virginia. Coffin wrote about the younger Doak,"His theory is one with his father's but he defends it with more plausibility . . . Under any other direction but that of his father, he might perhaps have attained just views of divinity." Coffin described the conversation with Doak like this: "We kept our tempers but our arguments clashed greatly. He supposed saving faith essentially to consist in the correct exercise of the intellect, and all right feelings of heart toward the redeemer to take place only by consequence . . . His theory of moral agency is that first the rational being perceives an object in a right or wrong light, then has a belief respecting it according to and necessarily following from his perception, then an emotion necessarily occasioned and determined by his belief, then a volition equally necessary and exactly correspondent. I asked him how the first sinner in the universe came by his wrong perception so far in the train before his first wrong volition. It could not be intentional because that would imply a wrong exercise of will before the first wrong exercise." Journal of Charles Coffin, 29 April 1801, McClung.

before the 1830s.[12] Several aspects of evangelicalism repelled most Southerners. Besides trying to discredit the tidewater Anglican establishment, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists threatened the stability of southern communities by challenging the hierarchies of class and the institution of slavery. At the same time, evangelicals preached against dancing, drinking, horse racing, and other activities that brought the white population together. Often evangelicals asked converts to forsake many ties of friendship and family that might draw them away from true religion. Besides that, the ritual practices like baptismal immersion that evangelicals introduced tended to separate southern converts from their peers.[13] As historian Christine Heyrman demonstrated, "Misgivings widely shared by southern whites focused on the prizing of religious fellowship over the family, the rejection of prevailing ideals of masculinity, and the demand for introspection and self-revelation."[14]

Presbyterians on the frontier in East Tennessee expressed this popular mistrust of evangelicals. Hezekiah Balch made matters worse with his harsh personality. Coffin confessed, "I must acknowledge that he was an imprudent man. I could fill pages in stating his rash steps, his unwise measures, and indiscreet words, where consummate prudence was demanded."[15] Obviously, Balch's personality worked better at creating controversy than winning converts. He even failed to convince his own wife of the New Divinity. In his journal, Coffin wrote that Hannah Balch was "absolutely afraid of the

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[12] Heyrman, Southern Cross, 5.
[13] Heyrman, Southern Cross, 15-17.

[14] Heyrman, Southern Cross, 26.

[15] Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:317.

Hopkinsian Divines as heretical and dangerous."[16] Interestingly, Coffin succeeded in winning her over to the New Divinity although her husband had failed.[17] Clearly then, Balch's personality compounded the problems evangelicals in general faced on the southern frontier.

The Presbyterian clergy who attempted to educate young men to serve as clergy on the frontier did not meet with popular acceptance. This was especially true when they tried to raise funds locally for their log colleges. Early settlers rejected the requests that college presidents such as Hezekiah Balch, Samuel Doak, and Samuel Carrick made for money. People in East Tennessee believed that evangelical clergymen should support their own projects. In 1821, after Charles Coffin had devoted nearly twenty years to raising money for Greeneville College, he offered his friend, Leonard Woods, then the president of the American Education Society, an analysis of why finding funds for a frontier college among Tennesseans proved so difficult. He wrote, "What the people have they have gained by the sweat of their brow and with the difficulties of settling a new country, and they too frequently think that this [education] should depend on their [the student's] own labor and exertion as they have done."[18] The frontier was a place of hard labor not quiet learning, and early settlers in East Tennessee believed that if one wanted an education, he must first put in a day's work.

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[16] Journal of Charles Coffin, 19 April 1801, McClung.

[17] Journal of Charles Coffin, 20 April 1801, McClung. When Coffin returned to New England in April 1801 to report on his trip to Tennessee, Hannah Balch wept profusely and said he had done much to relieve her fears concerning the Hopkinsian divines.

[18] Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 26 December 1821, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

Educators believed the difficulty in raising funds on the frontier derived from religious laxity among the populace. Coffin lamented to Woods, "There is not that state of information and religious feeling which the necessities of the church and the work so loudly call for. There is not a minister in Tennessee supported by the people, unless perhaps, one in Nashville and possibly one or two others."[19] In the eyes of the Hopkinsians, the lack of funding for evangelical causes resulted from impiety, which in turn derived from an insufficient number of preachers. Yet, preachers required education. Thus, according to the early educators in East Tennessee, the lack of educational funding produced a vicious cycle in which an impious population and a lack of educated clergy contributed to the failure of Presbyterianism to advance on the frontier.[20]

Hoping to break the vicious cycle of educational poverty Balch and his compatriots sought outside funding for the colleges. Hezekiah Balch used this method early in his college's history. In 1795, when he made his first trip to New England he received the aid of friendly Hopkinsians [21] His trip proved so successful that the next year the board of trustees ordered the construction of the college's first building. But the board did not seek funding only from the East. It also reached out to the South. After the college became operational, the board began to send out agents. In 1807, Greeneville

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[19] Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 26 December 1821, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.
[20] In Coffin's mind, the poverty of the clergy and professors was a contributing factor in the difficulty in raising money for colleges. He wrote, "A large portion of our professors are poor and under small advantages to set an animating example to the rich." Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 26 December 1821, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[21] Earle W. Crawford, An Endless Line of Splendor: Profiles of Six Pioneer Presbyterian Preachers-Educators (Wichita Falls: Humphrey Printing, 1983), 65.

College sent Robert McFarlan to solicit money in the South. The board of trustees hoped he would bring back from Louisiana and the Floridas support to add to the aid Balch and Coffin raised in New England.[22] But the South, not yet operating on the principle of disinterested benevolence, yielded far less fruit for Balch's college than did New England. In 1803, Hezekiah Balch took note of Samuel Carrick's failure to raise funds in the South. He wrote to Charles Coffin in New England, "The Trustees of Blount College, shortly after you left, dispatched Mr. Carrick over the mountains with a commission to illicit donations for that seminary, but did not obtain a single farthing."[23]

Although the plantation states contained enough wealth to provide a good number of potential benefactors, they offered little funding for an evangelical college. While some southerners supported education, few approved of evangelicals. Not only were college presidents less likely to find giving hands in the South, they were more likely to find thieves. In 1803, after Charles Coffin returned from raising support for Greeneville College in New England, the board of trustees requested that he venture into the South to investigate the possibility of gaining aid there. Coffin's father in Massachusetts, on hearing of the idea, warned his son that bandits robbed the president of Princeton of the money he collected in the South. Coffin Sr. wrote from New England, "President Balch and the trustees must be more competent judges of the expediency of your soliciting donations in South Carolina, Georgia, or elsewhere than I can pretend to be, but to me the probability of success appears a sufficient reason not to make the attempt."[24]

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[22] Journal of Charles Coffin, 29 October 1807, McClung.

[23] Hezekiah Balch to Charles Coffin, 13 August 1803, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.
[24] Charles Coffin Sr., to Charles Coffin Jr., 15 December 1803, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

Obtaining money for frontier colleges thus proved both difficult and dangerous in the South. Even Balch warned Coffin against bringing money from New England to the frontier. In 1803, as Coffin prepared to journey back to Tennessee from Massachusetts, Balch wrote an urgent letter warning, "If [the money] should be delivered to our area. I fear, I fear, I fear--would it not be safer to let it be on interest in some bank in New England . . . I think it would be much safer."[25]

Because the prevailing attitude of the frontier population worked against charitable giving towards theological education, and because of the danger of raising funds among the plantation owners of the cotton belt, educators like Balch and Doak needed to look elsewhere for support. Balch finally found a bounteous source of funding in New England. When Charles Coffin joined him on the frontier, his ties to the New Divinity men grew stronger. Coffin spent three years raising funds in New England for Greeneville College, then, in January 1805, Coffin, his infant son, his wife, and her sister moved to Greeneville. The Congregationalists sent Coffin back to the frontier as a missionary of a certain theology that they sought to propagate on the frontier through their work of evangelism.[26] In the eyes of the Hopkinsians a great deal depended on the success of the New Divinity on the frontier. Dr. Spring wrote Charles Coffin in September 1800, "I do not know what Satan has to do over the mountains, at any rate he

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[25] Letter from Hezekiah Balch to Charles Coffin, 13 August 13 1803, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.
[26] See Clifford Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1960). Griffin argues that the Congregationalists behind the benevolent empire saw themselves as keepers of the keys to a Christian society, and they used benevolent societies to spread their ideals.

must not be left in the undisturbed possession of that extensive territory . . . for the millenary scene will probably open in the midst of it."[27]

When Coffin arrived in Greeneville, he brought with him the religion of New England, and at the beginning of the 1800s that included benevolent societies. Coffin brought the influence of New England to East Tennessee by making Greeneville College an institution dedicated to teaching the goals and the work of disinterested benevolence. Through various societies, Coffin hoped to do in Tennessee what his fellow New Divinity men accomplished in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

The theology of disinterested benevolence demanded that Christians put their faith into practice by unselfishly exercising charity toward others. The most disinterested acts of charity involved the bringing of the Gospel to the unconverted. For this purpose, the Hopkinsians in New England formed missionary societies. Although the Connecticut Missionary Society, founded in 1798, was the first such society in the United States, a similar society soon appeared in Massachusetts in 1799 with men such as Leonard Woods and Nathaniel Emmons playing a leading role in its inception. Charles Coffin

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[27] Samuel Spring to Charles Coffin, 8 September, 1800. Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung. For an examination of the idea, popular in the early 1800's, that the United States could emerge as the millennial kingdom of Christ, see Robert Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). To Abzug, the nature of the reform movement lay in the religious imaginations of the reformers. By lending sacred significance to political and social issues, the reformers exerted an influence on society that was far out of proportion to their popularity or resources. The Millennium was an idea that the reformers fostered to accomplish their agenda of reform. See also, Daniel Feller, The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) Feller points to the optimism of the American people in the early Republic as giving birth to a reform impulse and a desire to see the establishment of a millennial kingdom. See also, John W. Kuykendall, Southern Enterprise; The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982).

attended the first meeting of the Massachusetts Missionary Society and served as a founding member along with his pastor, Dr. Spring.[28]

Soon other missionary societies sprang up in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Hopkinsians were instrumental in founding most of them. Leonard Woods played a leading role in starting the American Board for the Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Tract Society (1814), the American Education Society (1815), and the American Temperance Society (1826). Greeneville College offered the Massachusetts Congregationalists another opportunity to shape American culture around their interpretation of the Bible. To the Congregationalists of New England, Charles Coffin represented an important part of their missionary enterprise and they encouraged him to emulate New England in Tennessee. As the trans-Appalachian community of Hopkinsians corresponded and pooled resources, Coffin, one of New England's favorite sons, brought the projects of New England to Tennessee.

After Hezekiah Balch died in 1810, Coffin, as the president of Greeneville College, made the school a vehicle of disinterested benevolence. In 1812, Coffin founded the East Tennessee Missionary Society on the same plans as the one founded in Massachusetts in 1799. At the society meetings, a member read aloud a missionary sermon from New England or a publication of the London Missionary Society. Such literature convinced young men, particularly students at Greeneville College, of the need to take the Gospel to the rest of mankind through acts of disinterested benevolence. Coffin recorded in his diary the events of January 24, 1812: "William Anderson read the

[28]Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 16 December 1813. Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung. Coffin wrote, "We were about forming a Missionary Society on the plan of the Massachusetts one, at the commencement of which you may remember I was present."

piece in the magazine entitled The Apostle's Benevolence . . . returned in the evening to attend the society meeting in the college, when he told me, the piece he read in the morning must be right, and though his heart was very wicked, he thought he had entered into the Apostles' feelings that day."[29]

As an institution centered on disinterested benevolence, Greeneville College had its work set before it. The Missionary Society constantly needed support from New England, especially since it distributed Bibles and tracts.[30] During the War of 1812, Tennessee's dependence on New England for religious materials and support became clear. Coffin had trouble obtaining both.[31] As New England focused on the war and local concerns, the Hopkinsian project on the frontier was suffered. By December 1815, Coffin's friends in New England responded to his requests. Coffin Sr. wrote to his son about the hope Massachusetts still held for Tennessee: "I rejoice to see so many Bibles,

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[29] Journal of Charles Coffin, 24 January 1812, McClung. For the format of Society meetings, see Journal of Charles Coffin, 10, 24 January, 28 February, 10 June 1812.

[30] Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 16 December 1813, McClung. Coffin wrote to Leonard Woods requesting more New England involvement in the East Tennessee Society. It seems that the societies were founded with the expectation of New England's support. Coffin wrote, "At our last meeting Brother [Isaac] Anderson and myself were appointed to address your society, for the purpose of procuring some missionaries to labor with on our defined bounds, namely those of East Tennessee, to act under the direction of our society while here, having received such liberty from yours, and to be partly supported by each. By this blessing of God something very important may in this way be done in our new settlements, and as our public communication specifies the field for missionary labor, 'where Christ is seldom or never preached.' You will have opportunity when the subject comes before the society, to favor our view, if you approve them, as I trust you will."

[31] Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 27 August 1813. Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung. Coffin wrote to New England requesting materials for distribution. Coffin reported, "I wrote some time ago to Dr. Spring, mentioning at length that we had organized a Missionary Society and requested his influence to procure for us some Bibles, testaments, and tracts for charitable distribution." When the response to the request wasn't immediate, Coffin assumed that it was because of the war with England.

Leonard Woods responded to Charles Coffin on 14 November 1813, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung. Woods wrote, "I have conversed with Dr. Spring, according to your request respecting books. I presume he will be mindful of you. You 'fear the war dries up the stream of charity.' It is a reasonable fear. But the fact is otherwise."

testaments, and tracts sent to your society for distribution and hope the wilderness will blossom like a rose in a spiritual sense."[32]

In 1817, after Leonard Woods sent Coffin a fresh supply of tracts, the Tennessean was eager to receive more: "My hopes are strong that this spring the constitution of the New England Tract Society will be so altered as to admit of their sending us an abundance of tracts for gratuitous distribution."[33] The East Tennessee Missionary Society was the primary vehicle for the distribution of tracts, yet Coffin formed other societies, such as the East Tennessee Bible Society, that gave away Bibles not only in Tennessee but in other states. Because they took up their work for the purpose of ensuring the enlightenment of an emerging nation, its members concentrated their work on education as well as on the distribution of religious materials.[34]

In 1815, Leonard Woods and others founded the American Education Society to train Gospel ministers. By providing scholarships for young men studying for the ministry, the AES helped ensure the financial survival of the academies, colleges, and seminaries they attended. Though most of the students receiving aid from the AES attended schools in New England, the society sent support to students at Greeneville

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[32] Charles Coffin Sr. to Coffin Jr., 11 December 1815, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[33] Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 22 April 1817, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[34] Charles Coffin, A Discourse Preached Before the East Tennessee Bible Society at Their Annual Meeting in Knoxville, April 30, 1817. (Knoxville: Heiskell and Brown, 1817), 22. Coffin asserted, "In its progress over the earth the bible makes its place among the nations not only by its moral and spiritual benefits, but by its happy influence on all the improvements, which exalt, accommodate, and sweeten life. It opens the eyes of men on the manifold works of their God. It is a sun in the intellectual firmament, by whose beams the brightest torch of science is kindled. Hence we find, the greatest lights of mankind in the various departments of human knowledge, such as Bacon, Newton, Locke, Boyle, Lynnus, Blair, Hale, Jones, Rittenhouse, Franklin, Rush, and many others adorn the annals not of heathen but of Christian nations."

immediately.[35] Since Leonard Woods, the first president of the AES, and Charles Coffin were close friends who carried on a close correspondence, Greeneville College became one of the first institutions whose students received aid from the society. In a letter to Leonard Woods in 1817, Charles Coffin told of one student's thankfulness: "Mr. C. Bradshaw has received notice of the appropriation of one hundred dollars for his help in meeting the expenses of an education for the gospel ministry. His heart is filled with gratitude to the American Education Society."[36] Massachusetts benevolence had begun to win friends in Tennessee and to train a new generation of Presbyterian ministers. By encouraging young men to attend Greeneville College, where Coffin taught the New Divinity, and by supporting them financially in their studies, the American Education Society nurtured the spread of Hopkinsianism among the Presbyterian ministers of East Tennessee.

The Society further ensured the successful propagation of Hopkins's theology by supporting another school in East Tennessee. In 1819, Isaac Anderson, the Hopkinsian pastor of New Providence Church in Maryville, journeyed to Princeton seminary, where he pleaded with young men to go to the spiritually impoverished Southwest. In every case they replied, "What salary do they pay their ministers?" Disgusted, Anderson returned to Maryville determined to erect a seminary to train a native southwestern ministry.[37] In the same year, Anderson convinced the Synod of Tennessee to join in his

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[35] Natalie A. Naylor, "Holding High the Standard: The Influence of the American Education Society in Antebellum Education," History of Education Quarterly, 24(Winter 1984), 480.

[36] Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 22 April 1817, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[37] Harold M. Parker Jr., "A School of the Prophets at Maryville." Tennessee Historical Quarterly, 34 (Spring 1975), 78. In 1798 Rev. Isaac Anderson moved from Virginia, where he had studied under William Graham at Liberty Hall, to Knox County where he continued his preparation for the gospel

effort to create the Southern and Western Theological Seminary. Within the first two years, Anderson collected $35,000 from Presbyterians in East Tennessee to build the school.[38] Not only had the number of Presbyterians grown since Balch's fund raising days, but the region's economic wealth increased as well. Even with generous initial support form the South for the institution itself, the potential student faced difficulties obtaining tuition money. In 1826, the seminary received a 200 acre farm. Students worked on it to earn board, but most students had to look elsewhere for tuition.

Attendance at Southern and Western required a four-year college degree. Unless they were wealthy, those who attended were already drained of finances. This often necessitated a continued reliance on the benevolence of New England. In a letter to Leonard Woods in 1821, Coffin reported on the plans of one Greeneville graduate, "It may be reported with thanksgiving that Mr. George Painter, one of your late beneficiaries (AES), took his degree with reputation this fall . . . he will be one of the first class of students in the Southwestern Theological Seminary, which we hope to gain this Spring."[39] Coffin was asking gently for more scholarship money for his student. Although the American Education Society gave only $12 towards a student at Southern and Western Seminary in 1831, in 1834 the society gave over $500 in tuition to the seminary's students.[40]

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ministry under the direction of Union Presbytery. Two ministers, Samuel Carrick and Gideon Blackburn, had successfully prepared Anderson for his ordination by 1802. Blackburn introduced Anderson to Hopkinsianism and the young minister accepted the New Divinity. In 1811, Anderson took Blackburn's place at New Providence Church in Maryville.

[38] Charles Coffin to Leonard Woods, 26 December 1821, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.
[39] Parker, "A School of the Prophets at Maryville," 78

By supporting the work of Southern and Western, the American Education Society helped create a generation of Hopkinsian preachers in East Tennessee. Between 1819 and 1859, the seminary educated 159 men who entered the Presbyterian ministry.[41] In 1857, the minutes of the New School General Assembly showed that of the 18 ministers in Union Presbytery, 17 had received their education at Maryville. Of the 8 in Kingston Presbytery, 5 were Southern and Western men. Of the 11 in Holston Presbytery, 5 sat under Isaac Anderson.[42] Southern and Western Seminary thus played a critical role in the development of the Presbyterianism that emerged in East Tennessee during the 1830's. By financially supporting the students who attended the seminary at Maryville in the same way they funded the students at Greeneville, the Hopkinsians of the Northeast continued to transplant their theology to East.[43]

As a key member of the Hopkinsian coalition in East Tennessee, Charles Coffin provided a vital link between the needs of the frontier and the bounty of the East.[44]

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[40] Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Education Society (1831) and Eighteenth Annual Report of the American Education Society (1834), as quoted in Natalie A. Naylor, "Holding High the Standard: The Influence of the American Education Society in Antebellum Education," History of Education Quarterly, 24(Winter 1984), 480.

[41] Parker, "A School of the Prophets at Maryville," 80.

[42] Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (New School, 1857) as quoted in J.E Alexander, A Brief History of the Synod of Tennessee, 34.

[43] Naylor points out in "Holding High the Standard", 481, that the AES helped institutionalize theological education in seminaries, whereas before young ministers were apprenticed to an older minister. By aiding over 5,000 students in the antebellum years, the AES helped many seminaries survive and thus helped propagate the doctrines they taught.

[44] This fact is best illustrated by the eagerness with which the Board of Trustees of East Tennessee College (later the University of Tennessee) sought Coffin as president. In 1827, the institution procured Coffin's services at the price of a new large home and a salary of $1,500 per year during a time when a professor made $150 annually. The Board assumed that Coffin could raise enough funds to earn his keep. Stanley J. Folmsbee, "Blount College and East Tennessee College, 1789-1840: The First Predecessors of the University of Tennessee" East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications 17 (Spring 1945).

Coffin's relationship to Leonard Woods connected Tennessee to Massachusetts in a powerful way. The American Education Society helped spread the values of the Hopkinsians who directed the efforts of the evangelical benevolent empire that grew up in New England during the antebellum era. The society's support of Hopkinsian institutions in East Tennessee guaranteed the institutionalization of reform revivalism in the schools that trained most of the region's ministers. Reliance on northern funds made East Tennessee Presbyterianism a kind of colony of New England by 1836. This island of socially-minded reformers rested in a sea of individualistic southerners.

As descendants of the Puritans, Congregationalists in New England at the beginning of the nineteenth century looked for a very Christian society to emerge on the frontier. Their Christian heritage gave them the society of law, order, and education they knew. However, a new world was rising on the western horizon that could either reflect their culture or threaten it. So they sent their money and materials westward in support of the benevolent enterprises of Coffin, but primarily in hopes that Greeneville College might become a bulwark of New England's religion on the frontier.

When Charles Coffin became discouraged in 1813 at the progress of his work in Tennessee, Leonard Woods wrote words of encouragement: "Greeneville College is, I am confident, to do much for Christ. Tennessee is to be a glorious place yet. The precious seed that you sow weeping will yield a rich harvest."[45] A hope first held by the Puritans that they might carve a place for God's kingdom out of the wilderness remained alive in the minds of the New Divinity men of the early 1800s. Hopkinsians shared their

[45] Leonard Woods to Charles Coffin, 14 November 1813, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

hope in their letters, fostered it with their benevolent societies, and institutionalized it in their frontier colleges.

CHAPTER IV

The Old and the New: Two Schools of Presbyterians in East Tennessee

In the early 1830s, East Tennessee emerged as a unique area of the United States because it contained two types of Presbyterians. One group wanted to gain society's trust while the other wanted to change society. Despite the success of Charles Coffin and the Massachusetts Hopkinsians in transporting New England's reform evangelicalism to East Tennessee, southern Presbyterianism clashed greatly with the disinterested benevolence of Hopkinsians. Whereas New England's evangelicals focused on the transformation of society, after 1800 Presbyterians in the South who had not fallen under the influence of Congregationalists concerned themselves primarily with the conversion of individuals. The majority of southern Presbyterians therefore grew more and more willing to accommodate the ethos of a slave-holding society in order to win converts among whites. The differences between northern evangelicals and southern Presbyterians intensified the differences between the goals of the North and the South and lent sacred significance to the causes of each section in the Antebellum era.

Christine Heyrman writes in Southern Cross about southern evangelicals at the turn of the nineteenth century: "Nothing meant more to them than reclaiming white souls, and nearly any concession to the South's ruling race could be justified in the name of that

end."[1] Most Presbyterian leaders in the South willingly abandoned their early stand against slavery in order to make themselves more acceptable to slaveholders. Stephen Aron, in How the West Was Lost, documents this transformation among early Kentucky evangelicals. In the late eighteenth century, southern evangelicals censured slaveholding and reproached gentry lifestyles. After 1800, however, Christians throughout the slaveholding South reversed their antislavery commitments, thus making Christianity safe for masters.[2]

The first division between Presbyterians in East Tennessee occurred during the constitutional convention of the state of Franklin over educational funding and continued during Hezekiah Balch's Hopkinsian controversy. His trials resulted in the coming of Congregationalists to Tennessee. The success of New England's benevolent empire in East Tennessee resulted in the continued presence of evangelical Hopkinsians who understood and sympathized with the ideas and goals of many in the North. Hopkinsians like Charles Coffin used their energies to combat sins in society such as slaveholding. Therefore, they clashed with the revivalistic and individualistic Presbyterians who reached out to slaveholders. Those Presbyterians who wanted to protect white masters saw Hopkinsianism as a threat.

After Balch's trials, tension and resentment grew between those who backed him and the supporters of Samuel Doak. In 1803, Balch wrote to Charles Coffin in New

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[1] Heyrman, Southern Cross, 76. See also, John R. McKivigan, The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830 to 1865, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984). McKivigan argues that early in the 1800s, churches underwent a change from an anti-slavery position to one of tolerance. He contends that the South's economic dependence on slavery made the churches reluctant to expel slaveholders.

[2] Stephen Aron, How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 191.

England explaining the efforts he made at agitating his enemy, Doak and his students: "I have dispersed a number of your sermons on disinterested benevolence. Religious confusion and uproar rages to the degree beyond all measure. But the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice."[3] Certainly religious controversy would have raged to a lesser degree had Balch mailed fewer sermons. Yet it was characteristic of friendlier Hopkinsians like Charles Coffin to make overtures of friendship to Doak and his party. Their theology demanded that they love their enemies, and they made futile efforts at Presbyterian unity. Twice in the fall of 1807, Coffin led groups of elders from his New Providence church to Doak's church with offers of friendship. On September 1, the elders of New Providence approached the elders of Salem church suggesting they spend the day together "in the exercise of public worship." The elders at Salem vetoed the offer.[4] Later that fall, Hezekiah Balch and his elders from Harmony Church approached the elders of Doak's church for admission to the sacrament of communion and suggested that the two congregations join together in the celebration of the Eucharist. Samuel Doak became enraged and replied that if Balch were present, "he would not perform [the sacrament] but would go away." The elders at Salem denied the request.[5] Obviously old battle lines between Presbyterians in Tennessee persisted over time.

Twenty years after Balch's trials ended, a great rift between Hopkinsians and their fellow Presbyterians in East Tennessee endured. Early in 1819, the members of Hebron Church decided to invite Reverend Robert Glenn, a Hopkinsian, to become their pastor.

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[3] Hezekiah Balch to Charles Coffin, 13 August 1803, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[4] Journal of Charles Coffin, 1 September 1807, McClung.

[5] Journal of Charles Coffin, 23 November 1807, McClung.

However, Hebron church fell under the jurisdiction of Abingdon Presbytery (which contained the Doakites). In November 1819, John Doak wrote a letter to the members of Hebron Church on behalf of Abingdon Presbytery stating that the presbytery rejected their calling a minister whose beliefs contradicted the Westminster Confession of Faith. The letter also accused Charles Coffin, along with several other ministers from Union Presbytery who preached at the vacant pulpit, of poisoning the minds of Hebron's members with the theology of Hopkins.[6]

The Hebron Church and Charles Coffin complained about John Doak's letter. Coffin wrote to his neighboring presbytery in Abingdon that, "That heart is not right with God which is more in its element when hating than loving, when separating than uniting, when pulling down than building up."[7] Though Hebron Church maintained its desire to hire Glenn as pastor, the members of Abingdon Presbytery refused because of his Hopkinsian beliefs. The presbytery wrote back to the church, "We must contain you against receiving or encouraging any religious teacher or preacher who does not . . . adopt in all respects and strictly adhere to the doctrines and principles contained in our Confession of Faith and nothing else."[8] Of course the Hopkinsians strictly adhered to the Confession of Faith, but they also embraced Hopkins's theology and the work of disinterest benevolence it advanced. That work intimidated many Presbyterians in the South.

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[6] Charles Coffin to the Moderator and Members of the Presbytery of Abingdon, 1819. Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[7] Charles Coffin to the Moderator and Members of the Presbytery of Abingdon, 1819. Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[8] Abingdon Presbytery to Hebron Church, 30 March 1820, Minutes of Abingdon Presbytery, McClung.

The Hopkinsians posed a threat to southern Presbyterians particularly because of their stand on slavery. John Boles asserts that in the early 1800s, revivalistic Presbyterians in Kentucky began to gain upper-class converts and gradually became more accepting of slaveholders.[9] During that time, many southern Presbyterians looked to the Great Revival of Kentucky as an example of God's favor on frontier society and therefore stressed the need for individual and radical conversion experiences. In East Tennessee, the revivalistic Presbyterians led by men such as Samuel Doak and his sons accommodated themselves to the slaveholders in their fellowship. This change placed them in direct opposition to the Hopkinsians who sought the conversion of society more than the salvation of individuals.

Samuel Doak's group concerned itself primarily with the latter. Salem church, under Doak's leadership, experienced some of the unusual manifestations of spiritual revival present at the Great Revival in Kentucky during 1800-1801, when convicted sinners rolled in the aisles, climbed trees, and quaked violently on the floor.[10] It was not unusual that such aberrations in Presbyterian worship took place in Doak's church. The techniques of James McGready, the Presbyterian leader of the Kentucky revivals, were inspired by John Blair Smith, Samuel Doak's mentor at Hampden Sydney College.[11]

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[9] John B. Boles, "Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance," in Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., Religion in the South (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 26.

[10] William Sprague, Annals of the American, 3:396. Sprague maintains that Samuel Doak himself was often seized with the "jerks."

[11] John Boles discusses the Virginia revivals of the late 1780s and relates them to the 1800-01Great Revival in Kentucky. In 1788, James McGready went through Virginia on his way home to North Carolina. After witnessing the student revival at Hampden Sydney College being led by James Blair Smith, McGready was impressed with the power of revivalistic preaching. Boles, "Evangelicalism in the Old South," 22.

McGready himself preached for several months in Knoxville in 1796 on his way to Logan County, Kentucky. Certainly some East Tennessee Presbyterians witnessed his powerful revivalistic preaching centering on the conversion of the individual sinner.[12]

Presbyterians such as Doak grew increasingly concerned with the individual conversion experience of the ecstatic kind and more eager to display individual manifestations of the Holy Spirit in worship. When Balch heard of some on the occurrences in the church of one of Doak's students, he was astounded. He urgently wrote to Charles Coffin in New England about what had happened on one Sunday in December in 1803 at James Witherspoon's church. "Elijah told me that 30 or 40 danced—Darky Wyly told me that Mrs. McCaul danced astonishingly. It is said that Mr. Witherspoon danced at the sacrament at Limestone."[13] Balch considered such practices heretical and dangerous. He suspected that Witherspoon and Doak planned to "turn all exercises into holy exercises."[14] He wrote to Coffin, "Of late they have an entire, new and abominable exercise which consists in a large number of them collecting, and breaking wind behind, with all their might . . . what will be the end of these abominations?"[15] The Hopkinsians believed that such Presbyterians stressed the conversion experience to the detriment of doctrinal purity. On the other hand, many

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[12] In July 1798, during the midst of his father's Hopkinsian controversy in Tennessee, James Balch traveled to Logan County, Kentucky to visit McGready's churches at Red River and Muddy River. In the middle of the summer, a great revival took place in the churches, however, McGready lamented, "Alas! Danger was near—the devil had laid his plan." James Balch arrived from Tennessee and immediately ridiculed the emotionalism of the revivals and involved the struggling churches in dispute and confusion for almost a year. In the meantime, McGready's churches lay "in a miserable state of deadness and darkness." John B. Boles, The Great Revival, 43.

[13] Hezekiah Balch to Charles Coffin, 15 December, 1803, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[14] Hezekiah Balch to Charles Coffin, 15 December, 1803, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[15] Hezekiah Balch to Charles Coffin, 15 December, 1803, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

southern Presbyterians believed that the Hopkinsians pressed social reform to the point of excluding slaveholders from salvation. Such variance in attitudes explains why Doakites refused to serve Hopkinsians communion.

In contrast to the revivalists excited over individual conversion experiences, the Hopkinsians believed salvation involved the transformation of society, and in 1800 that meant the emancipation of slaves. As early as 1797, announcements calling for the formation of antislavery societies appeared in the Knoxville Gazette. Although Quakers played a prominent role in the early leadership, Presbyterian ministers soon took up the cause of antislavery. East Tennessean and minister John Rankin published his "Letters on Slavery" in 1825, and his contemporaries called him "the father of abolitionism" after his book gained a national audience. By the late 1820s, East Tennessee became a haven of antislavery sentiment in the South. As late as 1827, the area contained nearly one-fifth of all the antislavery societies in the United States and almost one-sixth of the total membership of all anti-slavery societies.[16]

Though the antislavery movement grew less popular in East Tennessee during the 1830s, as late as 1837 Hopkinsians still fought the peculiar institution. Elijah Eagleston, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Madisonville, expelled two of his most prominent members for selling slaves.[17] In 1838, a student at Southern and Western Seminary wrote

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[16] Walter Posey, "The Slavery Question in the Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest," Journal of Southern History, 15 (Spring 1949): 31-42. Posey outlines the slavery question in the Presbyterian Church in the old Southwest from its first action on the subject in 1787 until the split in 1837.

[17] The Emancipator, 19 April 1838, as quoted in Asa Earle Martin, "The Anti-Slavery Societies of Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Magazine, 1 (December 1915): 280. Martin argues that the strength of anti-slavery sentiment in East Tennessee was due to the region's original lack of economic dependence on slavery. In East Tennessee, the ratio of slaves to whites was about 1 to 12; in Middle Tennessee 1 to 3; and in West Tennessee 3 to 5. In no county in East Tennessee was the ratio greater than 1 to 6. Martin, "The Anti-slavery Societies of Tennessee", 281.

to a lady in New England, "About thirty students in the Theological Seminary in this place are preparing for the ministry, of whom twelve are abolitionists."[18]

Though separated geographically from antislavery northerners, many Presbyterians in East Tennessee shared their commitment to abolishing slavery.[19] One sees this shared commitment between New Englanders and East Tennesseans in their efforts to educate black ministers. John Glousester, a black man, visited Charles Coffin on November 5, 1807, and spent the night. Coffin commented on the visit, "He satisfied me much as to his religion and call to be a preacher of the Gospel among the blacks. Mr. Blackburn has been blessed to him and has taken great pains to instruct him so that he understands the Hopkinsian theory well."[20] The goal of the Hopkinsians of East Tennessee had in educating black ministers went far beyond ordination of an individual to preach. Good black ministers served the higher goal of procuring freedom for slaves. Coffin wrote to Leonard Woods about the goal of Christian education among the blacks in 1817: "We have three candidates for the ministry . . . one is to be licensed this spring. Another is a black man of excellent character. Sunday schools are spreading among the whites and blacks in this country, and will do something in preparing the way for the

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[18] A letter from a student at Maryville to a lady in New England quoted in Martin, "The Anti-slavery Societies of Tennessee", 281.

[19] James B. Stewart, "Evangelicalism and the Radical Strain in Southern Antislavery Thought During the 1820s," Journal of Southern History, 39 (Summer 1973): 379-96. Stewart points out that even though southern antislavery had little impact, some of its thought, including that of ministers in East Tennessee, showed genuine protests against the culture the slaveholders fashioned.

[20] Journal of Charles Coffin, 5 November 1807, McClung.

final emancipation of the slaves. The prisoner begs to loose his chains in this wonderful age."[21]

The Hopkinsians desired emancipation for political as well as religious reasons. Although the goals of those who sent Coffin to East Tennessee were spiritual in nature, the New Divinity men did not separate the spiritual from the social and the political.[22] The new theology succeeded on the frontier only so far as it produced a society that rejected sinful practice and embraced proper exercise of religion. When Leonard Woods wrote a farewell letter to Coffin in October 1804, he said that , "New England which has been so distinguished by its pious founders, by its sound principles and pure morals from age to age, is now in danger of losing its influence, its privileges, its glory and of being galled by the yoke which your southern nabobs are preparing for us."[23]

Certainly the Congregationalists of New England had the spiritual interests of Tennesseans at heart, and Coffin went across the mountains to carry Christianity to the verdant hills of the West. However, many pious Hopkinsians also wished to see New England gain a foothold in a territory that might threaten their way of life.[24] Hector Coffin wrote to his brother Charles from New England, "Since the adopting of the constitution, Massachusetts has herself paid upwards of forty millions of revenue and has twenty members in the house: When Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia, Tennessee, and Ohio

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[21] Leonard Woods from Charles Coffin, 22 April 1817, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[22] William Gribbin, The Churches Militant: The War of 1812 and American Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) Gribbin maintains that New England tried to propagate its political and social ideals through religion and the reform impulse.

[23] Leonard Woods to Charles Coffin, 30 October 1804, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[24] Gribbin argues that opposition between New England and the South grew up early regarding relations between the United States and Britain. William Gribbin, The Churches Militant. 5.

have paid less than eighteen millions, and have sixty members!!!"[25] The Christians who sent Charles Coffin to the frontier to join brother Balch were concerned about the salvation of America. Preserving the young country necessitated the moral and spiritual welfare of frontier society. If the frontier needed education, Hopkinsians willingly gave. Pushing for the eradication of slavery was just one task in the construction of a godly nation.[26]

In the 1790s, Hopkinsians were not the only Presbyterians to take up antislavery efforts. Samuel Doak began preaching and teaching against slavery before Hezekiah Balch and freed his slaves in the late 1790s.[27] Hezekiah Balch sold some of his slaves to pay off debts and later released the others.[28] Yet by 1838, Doak's son, Samuel W. Doak, along with other revivalistic Presbyterians in East Tennessee, abandoned their antislavery impulse. In that year they broke fellowship with the Hopkinsians and joined the Old School General Assembly that solidly rejected taking any stand on slavery.

In their revivalistic urge to lead individuals to salvation, those Presbyterians in East Tennessee who joined the Old School General Assembly abandoned efforts at Christianizing society by freeing the slaves in order to win the souls of slaveholders. John

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[25] Hector Coffin to Charles Coffin, 28 April 1813. Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

[26] See David Lewis, "The Reformer as Conservative" in Stanley Cohen and Lorman Ratner, eds, The Development of an American Culture (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1970). In his essay Lewis conducts a very succinct and useful study of the reform movements of the antebellum period. He shows that prior to the Panic of 1837, reform movements in the United States stemmed primarily from conservative impulses, especially in New England. The crest of the conservative reform movement was reached with the onset of the age of Jackson. With the coming of Charles G. Finney's ideas of perfection, a more radical type of reform emerged.

[27] Andrew E. Murray, The Presbyterian and the Negro: A History (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), 54.

[28] Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, 3:318.

Boles calls the southern church's acceptance of slavery one of the "great ironies of southern history." Although southern Christians criticized slavery as a sin in the late eighteenth century, by the mid nineteenth century they defended it as divinely-ordained. Boles writes, "When finally southern evangelicals discovered social responsibility, it was a conservative ethic not to perfect society but to apotheosize slaveholding."[29]

In East Tennessee, however, a different type of Presbyterianism remained. Reform evangelicals such as Coffin maintained their theology of disinterested benevolence and continued to believe that they held a responsibility to create a Christian society. Although the revivalists and the reformers often clashed in the antebellum period, the difference between the two Presbyterianisms of East Tennessee became clear during the Old School/New School split that occurred in the Presbyterian church in 1837—a split that began over the issue of slavery.[30]

Although Presbyterians on the frontier benefited from the benevolence of the Congregationalists, (especially men such as Balch, Anderson, and Coffin), other Presbyterians resented the active role Congregationalists began to take in the courts of the church. Those who allied themselves against the Plan of Union and the Congregationalist benevolent societies became known as Old School Presbyterians, while those who joined with the Congregationalists in the support of benevolent societies assembled themselves in the New School. Because of the investment Congregationalists made in institutions

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[29] Boles, "Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South," 29-30.
[30] C.C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 168-78. Goen provides an excellent explanation of how the Old School/New School split began with discussions over the issue of slavery.

including Greeneville College and Southern and Western Seminary, by 1837 the majority of Presbyterian ministers in East Tennessee aligned themselves with the New School.[31]

As the Congregationalists of New England strained to create a Christian America, the Plan of Union allowed antislavery sentiment to work its way into the Presbyterian church. Hopkins denounced slavery as a great national sin, and his followers worked to rid the country of the institution. The opening of the Erie Canal in the 1830s facilitated western migration, and gave Plan of Union churches planted by Hopkinsian Congregationalists in the Northwest strength and influence in the Presbyterian General Assembly. The voices of many Hopkinsians spreading antislavery sentiment in the Presbyterian church thus grew stronger.[32]

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[31] J.E. Alexander asserts that the synod of Tennessee left the Old School General Assembly because a majority of Tennessee's ministers and institutions depended on the benevolent societies for support. Due to Hezekiah Balch's teaching and the popularity of Nathaniel Emmon's sermons, many in East Tennessee became Hopkinsians. Alexander, A Brief History of the Synod of Tennessee from 1817 to 1887 (Philadelphia: MacCalla and Co. 1888). George M. Marsden attributes East Tennessee's New Schoolism almost totally to Balch (Marsden, The Evangelical Mind); as does Ernest Trice Thompson in Presbyterians in the South. John W. Kuykendall points out, that a lively streak of Hopkinsian theology had existed in East Tennessee since the early leadership of Hezekiah Balch. Although the Old School clergy of the South made numerous efforts to root out this inconsistency, Hopkinsianism continued to exert a great influence within the Synod of Tennessee throughout the antebellum period and contributed to the effectiveness of the volunteer societies in East Tennessee. Kuykendall, Southern Enterprise. 34.

[32] Hubert V. Taylor, "Slavery and the Deliberating of the Presbyterian General Assembly, 1833-1838," (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1964). Taylor asserts that the participants in the Presbyterian deliberations over slavery between 1833 and 1838 were increasingly forced to choose sides. Before 1830, the Presbyterian church had been relatively homogenous. But new interpretations of the old constitutional standards introduced innovations in government and doctrine into the church as New England Congregationalists and Presbyterians established united churches in the Northwest. After the opening of the Erie Canal and a great amount of western migration, such united churches began to make their mark on the church. Taylor argues that the wedge of division was driven deep by the pressure of the moral-religious crusade which was an integral part of the Presbyterian-Congregational faith of the Northwest. The united reaction of the South against these crusaders' efforts to convert the Presbyterian assembly to abolitionism multiplied the pressure. Southern men united in a desperate effort to oust slaveholders from the church. Meanwhile, leaders of the Old School in the North sought numerical strength in their stand against radical innovations in the church.

Concerned at the growing strength of the antislavery party in the Presbyterian church in the antebellum era, conservative leaders in both the South and the North sounded the alarm. Between 1833 and 1838, battle lines formed as southern slaveholders felt their fortunes threatened by abolitionists, and northern conservatives feared radicals might disturb the peace of the church.[33] On June 5, 1835, Rev. J.H. Dickey of Ohio made an overture to the General Assembly meeting in Philadelphia calling for the body to denounce the institution of slavery. In response, in 1836 the Assembly appointed a committee to report on the question of slavery..[34] At that Assembly, all action on the question of slavery was "indefinitely postponed," meaning that it could be revisited at any time. The Old School immediately began making plans to rid itself of the abolitionists—a task accomplished in 1837-38. In attacking the Congregationalist Hopkinsians and the Presbyterian courts under their influence and leadership, the Old School struck at the major source of their fears.[35]

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[33] C. Bruce Staiger, "Abolitionism and the Presbyterian Schism of 1837-1838," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 36 (December 1949) 391-414. Staiger holds that the slavery question was the primary cause of the Old School/New School Split of 1837. He shows how Old School southerners, such as William Plumer, were the primary agitators for the split. He says that opposition to New Schoolism came from three sources: from the godly, who were concerned with the purity of the faith; from conservatives, alarmed by the radicalism of the New School including abolitionism; and those whose material fortunes were affected by the agitation of the slavery question. Developments concerning slavery within the Assemblies of 1835-36 united forces and caused the split.

[34] Elwyn Smith, "The Role of the South in the Presbyterian Schism of 1837-1838." Church History, 29 (Spring 1960): 44-63. Smith says that the slavery-abolition question did not cause the schism of 1837-38. Instead the slavery issue bound the South to the Old School and gave it the extra influence needed to expel the Synods formed under the Plan of Union.

[35] Taylor points out that the northern desire to remove radical elements was paralleled by the southern desire to be rid of the abolitionists. The exorcism of radical elements from the church was accomplished by constitutional means. The Old School secured the abrogation of the 1801 Plan of Union and then declared four synods formed under this plan to be no part of the Presbyterian Church. By these actions, it separated the geographical areas in which New Schoolism and abolitionism thrived from the church.

When the General Assembly convened in Philadelphia in 1837, the Old School conservative party, having gathered its forces, dominated. In a bold act of self-defense, the Old School voted to abrogate the 1801 Plan of Union and to bar all Congregationalist participants from voting in the General Assembly. Those New School participants in the Assembly who escaped expulsion protested the anti-Congregationalist acts as "tyrannical, unconstitutional, null and void."[36] In 1837, having lost influence in the General Assembly, New School Presbyterians went home disappointed.

New School supporters attended the 1838 General Assembly and demanded representation. When denied that right, they withdrew and formed the New School General Assembly. Most of those present at the new Assembly came from those synods where Congregationalists took a leading role in the work of the Presbyterian church under the Plan of Union.[37] Since few Congregationalists involved themselves in the work of the Presbyterian church in the South, most southern synods remained with the Old School Assembly. In the entire South, only the synod of Tennessee withdrew from the Old School General Assembly to join with the New School.

The Synod of Tennessee aligned itself with the New School General Assembly in an otherwise solidly Old School South because of its strong dependence on the work of Congregationalist benevolence societies, particularly the American Education Society.[38]

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[36] Quoted in Alexander, A Brief History of the Synod of Tennessee from 1817 to 1887, 35.
[37] George Marsden demonstrates how the Congregationalist influence in the Presbyterian church under the Plan of Union greatly increased with the work of the benevolence societies. Marsden, Evangelical Mind.

[38] Natalie A. Naylor points out that the New School believed in interdenominational cooperation for evangelism, while the Old School desired to maintain strict control over the education of its ministers to maintain doctrinal purity. Naylor, "Holding High the Standard: The Influence of the American Education Society in Antebellum Education," 483.

Frontier Presbyterians relied on the benevolent empire because of the lack of funding for ministerial education. In East Tennessee, the Presbyterian split of 1837-38 between the Old and New Schools really began 53 years earlier in an angry battle among Presbyterian ministers to secure public funding for their church-related schools from the state of Franklin. Due to the Congregationalist investment in East Tennessee, reform evangelicalism, strongest in the North, retained a strong presence in East Tennessee after the split in the Presbyterian Church.

On the other hand, not all Presbyterians in East Tennessee felt that they could remain in the New School Assembly. In the fall of 1838, the Synod of Tennessee met in Rogersville and passed resolutions denouncing the Old School and supporting the New School by a vote of 32 to 8. Samuel Witherspoon Doak led the dissenting minority along with another minister named James A. Lyon. With six of the ruling elders from their churches, the two ministers left the Holston Presbytery to form the Old School Holston Presbytery. The revivalistic Presbyterians under the leadership of Samuel W. Doak left the New School to unite with the Old School because the New School was intolerant of slaveholders.[39] According to Ernest Trice Thompson, the southern Presbyterian historian, slavery played the decisive role in the split of 1837. The Old School

[39] In 1838, the two ministers and six elders who were members of the Old School Holston Presbytery published in the preamble to their minutes the reason why they chose to adhere to the Old School General Assembly. Stated simply, they regarded, "this Old School as the constitutional and true General Assembly because it consisted of those members and only those members which the constitution requires to compose that body." Although this was their official reason for leaving the New School, historians like Marsden and Thompson agree that Southern Presbyterians united with the Old School because of its willingness to remain silent on the slavery issue. Minutes of the Old School Holston Presbytery as recorded by Samuel W. Doak. Doak Family Papers, Tennessee Library and Archives, Nashville.

Northerners' willingness to remain silent on the slavery issue "helped to solidify southern support for the Old School and thus ensure the resultant division of the church."[40]

As the Civil War approached, even the New School General Assembly divided over slavery. When the New School in the South formed the United Synod and separated itself from the Northern New School in 1859, only the Synod of Tennessee remained with the northern side and true to the cause of the Union. On the other hand, the revivalist Presbyterians made sacred the defense of slavery and the goals of the South. William G. (Parson) Brownlow, a Methodist pastor whose newspaper, Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator, became a sounding board for Unionist sentiment in East Tennessee, wrote in January 1864 about the churches of the town: "The Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches here would be better used for grog shops selling mash corn whiskey for rebel money than to be used to preach and pray such treason, blasphemy and old blackguardism as have disgraced their walls and pulpits for the last three years."[41] The Old School in East Tennessee became militant in its defense of slavery and the South.

Just as the revivalist Presbyterians made the cause of the South holy, Charles Coffin and the reform evangelicals saw as their divinely appointed task the preservation of the Union. Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, despite numerous obstacles, New England retained a presence in East Tennessee and the work of disinterested benevolence continued. The hope of creating a godly society remained in the minds of Presbyterian

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[40] Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, 1:411. See also Marsden, The Evangelical Mind, 98-9.
[41] Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator, 9 January 1864, McClung.

Hopkinsians in a section of the South that found itself filled with Unionist sympathizers.[42]

Benevolent societies that combined the efforts of both Congregationalist and Presbyterians were a part of the Hopkinsian plan for a Christian society. The New Divinity men of East Tennessee held to the usefulness of such organizations until the Civil War. Charles Coffin wrote to his son Cornelius in 1852 about the benefits he still saw in the connection Tennessee had with New England: "That the union which I saw established in the General Assembly of 1801 is still in full authority between us and the Congregationalists for the evangelization of the West bears light upon our prospects as a church: availing itself of some of the loveliest and best cooperation it can find on the globe for the conversion of the world."[43]

The American theologians of the revolutionary era, motivated by the vision of God's New Jerusalem descending from the skies above the frontier, charged antebellum Christians with the responsibility of preserving the world from sin. The prospect of the West emerging as a Christian society prompted Hopkinsians to send money, tracts, and Bibles across the mountains to perpetuate their vision in frontier schools and through benevolent societies. By 1860, clouds of war formed on the horizon, but by then the seed of a godly nation had taken root, and New England looked for a rich harvest.

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[42] W. Harrison Daniel, "Protestant Clergy and Union Sentiment in the Confederacy," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, 23 (Spring 1964): 284-90. Daniel asserts that the area of the Confederacy in which Union sentiment among the clergy was East Tennessee.

[43] Charles Coffin to Cornelius Coffin, 16 April 1852, Letters of Charles Coffin, McClung.

CONCLUSION

The division of Presbyterians in East Tennessee over the Civil War did not occur suddenly. The war simply threw into bold relief the deep theological and philosophical differences between northern and southern Presbyterians. Greeneville College and Southern and Western Seminary taught many East Tennessee Presbyterian clergymen the ideas of northern evangelicals concerning social reform. On the other hand, the individualism of the Kentucky and Virginia revivals encouraged most Presbyterians to accept the values of the slaveholder. The Civil War asked East Tennessee Presbyterians which they valued more highly, the salvation of white masters and their continued presence and support, or the preservation of the Union and the Christianization of America. Presbyterian ministers and church members in East Tennessee divided over this question.

In 1864, the New School Presbyterians in the South (the United Synod) merged with the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America. The Synod of Tennessee, on the other hand, remained loyal to the Union. Unwilling to become affiliated with Confederate Presbyterians, the Synod of Tennessee united with the northern New School in 1865. In 1870, the synod met at New Market to reorganize itself as the only Presbyterian body in the South loyal to the New School Presbyterians of the North. Of the Synod's six presbyteries, three – Union, Kingston, and Holston – operated in East Tennessee, while Nashville, New Orleans, and Austin Presbyteries became more

isolated bodies of New Schoolism. Though few in number, those southern Presbyteries that remained in the New School continued to work for the Christianization of American culture. Because of their vision of a godly nation, the Synod of Tennessee continued to provide moral leadership in an age of social strife.

When the Civil War ended, Confederate Presbyterians paid a high price for supporting slaveholders. As with many rebel church buildings, that of the Confederate First Presbyterian Church in Knoxville suffered under Union army possession. The Session of First Presbyterian complained to the Provost Marshal of the District of East Tennessee about the miserable condition of their confiscated church building. Brigadier General S.P. Carter replied, "Investigation goes to show that the church was first decorated by being made use of by a disloyal congregation – led by a disloyal preacher – in disseminating treason and treasonable sentiments. Happens now to be applied to a very good purpose – that of educating the colored youth of the city."[1]

In many ways, slavery changed Presbyterians in the South more that they changed their society. C.C. Goen, in Broken Churches, Broken Nation, laments the inability of evangelicals in the South to provide moral leadership concerning slavery prior to the Civil War. He asserts that Christians in the antebellum South allowed slaveholders to lead them when the church should have led society. Goen writes of Confederate evangelicals: "At too many points in the fateful onrush of events they sounded all too dismally like the tragicomic character in some legendary revolution who is reported to

[1] Brigadier General S.P. Carter to Joseph King, clerk of the Session of First Presbyterian Church, 15 May 1865, "A Copy of Correspondence that Took Place Between the Leaders of the First Presbyterian Church at Knoxville and the Military Authorities at Said Point in Relation to Occupancy, Abuse, and Etc. of Said Church," McClung.

have cried at a moment of crisis, 'The mob is in the street! I must find out which way they are going, for I am their leader.'"[2]

In contrast to Confederate Presbyterians, the Hopkinsians of East Tennessee provided moral guidance to a generation of Presbyterians throughout the antebellum era. Institutions such as Greeneville College and Southern and Western Seminary spread the theology of disinterested benevolence to the generation of ecclesiastical leaders who faced the divisive issue of slavery. Benevolent societies urged Christians to build their society on the foundation of charity. Although Hezekiah Balch invited Congregationalists southward simply because of his college's immediate financial needs, the theology New England sent to Tennessee became a force of social change that always asked its followers to look beyond the needs of the moment to the ideal society. The vision of the New Jerusalem led East Tennessee's Hopkinsians into conflict over slavery and with the Presbyterians who supported it, and eventually into war.

[2] C.C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nation (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985), 189.

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